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BY JOHN BROWN, D. D.,

SENIOR MINISTER OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION, BROUGHTON PLACE, EDINBURGH, AND PROFESSOR OF EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY TO THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

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1851.

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It would be doing violence to a conviction of duty, as well as to a feeling of propriety, were the Author to allow the Second Edition of these "Expository Discourses" to go forth without an expression of gratitude for the kind reception they have met with, first, to his Master, the advancement of whose cause was their ultimate design—and then to his brethren, the promotion of whose spiritual improvement was their immediate purpose. He is deeply convinced that these two indissolubly connected objects are to be gained by the same means,—the illustration of the Divine Word; and the assurance that he has in any degree succeeded in the effectual employment of that means, is abundant compensation—great reward for any measure of labor.

The work appears, in substance and form, materially unchanged. The Author has, however, availed himself of the opportunity furnished by the reprint of giving it a thorough revision, and trusts that it will be found upon the whole improved. If it be so, it is owing in no small degree to kind suggestions from his literary friends, which are gratefully acknowledged. Among those benefactors, he must be permitted to specify his venerable kinsman, the Rev. Henry Thomson, D.D., Penrith, and his esteemed friend, the Rev. John Taylor, M.D., Auchtermuchty. The minute and laborious examination to which the latter spontaneously submitted, is felt as the highest compliment he could have paid to the work, and one of the greatest favors he could have bestowed on its Author. Another valued friend, the Rev. William Pringle, of Auchterarder, has materially contributed to the superior accuracy of this Edition, by affording it the advantage of his singularly acute eye in the revision of the sheets as they passed through the press, and to its superior usefulness, by the corrected and enlarged Indices which he has furnished.

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J. B.

10, Gayfield Square, *October*, 1849.

PREFACE.

The work now laid before the public is substantially a Commentary, though in a form somewhat peculiar. It is not a continuous comment on words and clauses, nor does it consist of scholia or annotations, nor of lectures in the sense in which that word is ordinarily employed in this country, nor of sermons, either on select passages, or on the successive verses of the sacred book which is its subject. The Epistle is divided into paragraphs, according to the sense—of course varying very considerably in length. Each of these paragraphs, embodying one leading thought, forms the subject of a separate discourse, in which an attempt is made to explain whatever is difficult in the phraseology, and to illustrate the doctrinal or practical principles which it contains; the object being not to discuss, in a general and abstract manner, the subjects which the texts may suggest, but to bring clearly out the Apostle's statements, and their design; and to show how the statements are fitted to gain the objects for which they are made. If the Author has been able, in any good measure, to realize his own idea, grammatical and logical interpretation have been combined, and the exposition will be found at once exegetical, doctrinal, and practical.

Whatever can be interesting and intelligible only to the scholar has been thrown into the notes. Had the Author yielded to his own tastes, these notes would probably have been more numerous and elaborate than they are. But the recollection of the primary design of the work checked the inclination to indulge in philological remark; though he trusts that in almost every instance, where the exegesis is difficult or doubtful, the foundation of the interpretation adopted has been indicated with sufficient clearness.

The translation of the Epistle, though prefixed to the Expository Discourses, was written after them, and indeed contains a condensed statement of the result of the Author's investigations. This accounts for the fact that, in an instance or two, the sense given in the translation slightly differs from that commented on in the Exposition.

To prevent disappointment it is right to state that the object of the Author has been to produce not so much an original work, as a satisfactory exposition. In his estimate of the duties of an interpreter of Scripture, next to the careful study of the original text, ranks the attentive reading of what has been published for the illustration of it. Under this conviction he has studied the Epistle, not only without note or comment, but with all the notes and comments within his reach; and the book he now respectfully lays before the church contains the substance of all that in his thoughts and reading seemed best fitted to illustrate the meaning and promote the objects of the inspired writer. Of the helps of which he has availed himself, a list is furnished at the close of these prefatory remarks. He has distinguished by an asterisk those to which he has been chiefly indebted.

There is one author to whom his obligations are peculiarly great—Archbishop Leighton.[1] The index bears witness to the number of references to

[1] "A beautiful writer, and one of the best of men."—Sir James Mackintosh.

"The Practical Commentary upon the First Epistle General of St. Peter;" and, in perusing the Discourses, the reader will find many quotations from its pages. That very remarkable work teaches a singularly pure and complete theology—a theology thoroughly evangelical, in the true sense of that often abused epithet, being equally free from Legalism on the one hand, and Antinomianism on the other; in the spirit of enlightened and affectionate devotion, love to the brotherhood, and charity to all men; and in a style which, though very unequal, indicates in its general structure a familiarity with the classic models of antiquity, and, in occasional expressions, is in the highest degree felicitous and beautiful. As a biblical expositor, LEIGHTON was above his own age; and, as at heologian and an experimental and practical writer, few have equalled, still fewer surpassed him, either before or since his time.

For these quotations the Author expects thanks from his readers, most of whom are not likely to be very familiar with the Archbishop's writings; and, though not unaware of the hazard to which he has exposed his own homely manufacture, by inserting into it—it may be, often somewhat inartificially—portions from a web of such rich material and exquisite workmanship, he will greatly rejoice if these specimens induce his readers to cultivate a more extensive acquaintance with those truly precious remains; which, though laboring under more than the ordinary disadvantages of posthumous publications, through the extreme slovenliness with which they, with but few exceptions, were in the first instance edited, are eminently fitted to form the Student of Theology to sound views and a right spirit, and to minister to the instruction and delight of the private Christian: possessing, in large measure and rare union, those qualities which must endear them to every christian mind, however uncultured; and those which are fitted to afford high gratification to them in whom the knowledge and love of evangelical truth are connected with literary attainment and polished taste. The experience of Dr. Doddridge's correspondent[1] is not singular: "There is a spirit in ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON I never met with in any human writings, nor can I read many lines in them without being moved." COLERIDGE borrowed his texts from him, in his "Aids to Reflection;" and it is readily acknowledged, that these volumes owe to him their most attractive ornaments.

The Author would probably never have thought of offering these illustrations to the world, had not a number of much respected members of his congregation earnestly solicited him, before increasing age should make it difficult, or approaching death impossible, to furnish them with a permanent memorial of a ministry of considerable length, full of satisfaction to him, and, he trusts, not unproductive of advantage to them. Such an application could not be treated lightly; and on weighing the subject, he found that he durst not refuse to comply with it.

Having arrived at this conviction, it did not appear to him that the object in view could be better gained, than by presenting them with the substance of those illustrations of a very precious portion of the inspired volume, which had already been delivered to them in the ordinary course of pastoral instruction. That this offering, intended for their spiritual improvement and their children's, will be accepted in the spirit in which it is made, he knows them too well to entertain a doubt; and if to them it serve its great objects, he will have an abundant reward. If beyond these limits it should find a favorable reception, and produce salutary effects, this will be an additional subject of agreeable reflection and grateful acknowledgment.

10, GAYFIELD SQUARE, *May*, 1848.

[1] Dr. Henry Miles.

LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL AUTHORS CONSULTED

DURING THE COMPOSITION OF

THESE EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.

Besides the General Commentaries on the whole Scriptures, by *Grotius, Le Clerc, Poole, Henry, Goadby, *S. Clark, Scott, A. Clarke, Mant, and D'Oyley; and on the New Testament, by Beza, E. Schmidt, Marloratus, *Wolfius, Beausobre and L'Enfant, *Bengel, Kuttner, Rosenmuller, Hammond, Whitby, Guyse, Wells, Doddridge, and Gilpin, the following works on the Apostolical Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, and the Epistles of Peter, have been consulted:—

1. *Joannis Calvini Commentarii in Epistolas Canonicas Petri, Joannis, Jacobi, et Judæ. Folio. Genevæ, 1554.
2. In priorem B. Petri Apostoli Canonicam Epistolam, eruditissimus Commentarius. Authore D. Joanne Hesselio, Regio Lovanii Professore. 8vo. Lovanii. 1568.
3. *ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΟΥ Ἐξήγησις εἰς τὰς ἑπτὰ καθολικὰς λεγομένας ἐπιστολάς. Oecumenii Expositio in septem illas, quæ Catholicæ dicuntur, Epistolas. Cum interpretatione latina Joannis Hentenii. 4to. Francofurti, 1610.
4. *Paraphrase sur les Epistres Catholiques, par Moyse Amyraut. 8vo. Samur, 1646.
5. An Exposition of all St. Paul's Epistles; together with an explanation of those other Epistles of the Apostles St. James, Peter, John, and Jude, by David Dickson, Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow. Folio. Lond. 1659.
6. Urim et Thummim, seu exegesis Epistolarum Petri et Joannis. Autore D. Joanne Langio, SS. Prof. Theol. in Acad. Hal. ii. tom. folio. Halæ, 1734.
7. *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Seven (commonly called) Catholic Epistles, attempted in imitation of Mr. Locke's manner; to which are annexed several Critical Dissertations, by George Benson, D.D. 4to. Lond. 1756.
8. Epistolarum Catholicarum Septenarius Græce, cum nova versione latina ac scholiis grammaticis et criticis. Opera Jo. B. Carpzovii. 8vo. Halæ, 1790.
9. D. Sam. Fred. Nath. Mori Prælectiones in Jacobi et Petri Epistolas. Edidit Car Aug. Donat. 8vo. Lipsiæ, 1794.
10. A New Literal Translation from the Original Greek, of all the Apostolical Epistles; with a Commentary and Notes, philological, critical, explanatory, and practical, by James Macknight, D.D. 4 vols. 4to. Edin. 1795.
11. Versio Latina Epistolarum Novi Testamenti, perpetua annotatione illustrata a Godf. Sigism. Jaspis. ii. tom. 8vo. Lipsiæ, 1797.
12. *Epistolæ Catholicæ Græce, perpetua annotatione illustratæ a Dav. Jul. Pott. 2 vols. 8vo. Gotting. 1810.
13. Conciones in Epistolam primam Petri habitæ per D. Meinhardum Schotanum, SS. T. P. in Academia Franequerensi. 4to. Franecker, 1637.
14. Sermons on the First Epistle General of Saint Peter, by Nicholas Byfield. Folio. London, 1637.
15. S. Apostoli Petri Epistola Catholica prior, perpetuo Commentario explicata, una cum partitione tum generali totius Epistolæ ac singulorum capitum, tum speciali singulorum versuum; necnon cum observatione doctrinarum ex singulis vocibus per Jacobum Laurentium, Amstelodamensem. 4to. Campis, 1640.

16. Utriusque Epistolæ Divi Petri Apostoli Explicatio Analytica, docucumentis suis ubique illustrata et usibus ad singularem pietatis profectum applicata. Authore Gulielmo Amesio, SS. T.D. 24to. Amst. 1650.
17. Jonæ Slichtingii a Bukowiek Commentarius in priorem Apostoli Petri Epistolam Catholicam. Bib. Frat. Pol. vol. vii. Fol. Irenop. 1656.
18. Joannis Crellii Franci Commentarius in prioris Epistolæ Petri partem. Bib. Frat. Pol. vol. iv. Folio. Eleuther, 1656.
19. *A Brief Exposition of the First and Second Epistle General of Peter, by Alexander Nisbet, Minister at Irwin. 12mo. Lond. 1658.
20. *Commentarius super priorem D. Petri Epistolam, in quo textus declaratur, quæstiones dubiæ solvuntur, observationes eruuntur, et loca in speciem pugnantia conciliantur. Opera et studio Joannis Gerhardi, SS. Th. Doc. 4to. Jenæ, 1660.
21. *A Practical Commentary on the First Epistle General of St. Peter, by the Most Reverend Dr. Robert Leighton, sometime Archbishop of Glasgow. 2 vols. 4to. York and London, 1693, 4to.
22. D. Jo. Sal. Semleri Paraphrasis in Epistolam I. Petri cum latinæ translationis varietate et multis notis. 12mo. Halæ, 1783.
23. *Exposition of the First Epistle of Peter, considered in reference to the whole System of Divine Truth. Translated from the German of Wilhelm Steiger, by the Reverend Patrick Fairbairn. 2 vols. 16vo. Edin. 1836.

The Annotata in the Critici Sacri, tom. ix. by Valla, Erasmus, Vatablus, Castalio, Clarius, Zegerus, H. Stephanus, Drusius, Camero, and Cappellus, have been carefully looked at; and also the Notes in Camerarius, Raphelius, Elsner, Knatchbull, Kypke, Palairet, Lœsner, Al. Morus, Alberti, Ottius, Keuchenius, Hombergk, Bos, Heinsius, Bowyer, Symonds, and Wakefield.

The Author also gratefully notices the advantages he has derived from Fleetwood, Stennet, and Jay, on Relative Duties; from Bishop Sanderson and Joseph Fawcett, on Christian Freedom, and Honoring all Men; from Andrew Fuller, on the Duties of Church Members to their Office-bearers; and from Notes of a Sermon by Binney on Christian Courtesy. He has little doubt that there are both thoughts and expressions for which he is indebted to others, that are not expressly ascribed to their authors; but his readers will do him but justice in believing, that such obligations are not acknowledged, merely because they have not been observed.

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10. world, 759. But the God of all grace, 768; who hath called us, 769; to his eternal glory, 771; by Christ Jesus, 770; after that ye have suffered a while, 773; make
11. you perfect, 763; stablish, 764; strengthen, 764; settle you, 765; to him be glory
12. and dominion forever and ever, Amen, 774. By Sylvanus, 784; a faithful brother unto you, 785; as I suppose, 785; I have written briefly, 783; exhorting, 783; and
13. testifying, 782; that this is the true grace of God, 779; wherein ye stand, 781. The
14. church that is at Babylon, 786; saluteth you, and so doth Marcus, my son, 788. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity, 788. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus, 790. Amen, 791.

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A TRANSLATION

OF THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PETER.

I. 1. PETER, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elected sojourners
of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and
2. Bithynia—*elected* according to the fore-appointment of God
the Father, by a spiritual separation, in order[1] to obedience,[2]
and being sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ:[3] May
grace and peace be multiplied to you.
3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who, according to the abundance of his mercy, has anew
made us his children;[4] so as to give us a living hope[5] through
4. the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; so as to make
us heirs of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and un-
5. fading, secured in Heaven for you,[6] who are preserved[7] by
the power of God through faith, till[8] the salvation prepared to
6. be revealed[9] in the last time; in which *time*[10] you shall re-
joice,[11] who now for a short season (since it is needful), are
7. sorrowful amid manifold trials, that the proof[12] of your faith[13]
may be found[14] much more valuable than that of gold (which,

[1] BEZA's theology seems to have mastered his scholarship when he rendered ἐν as=εἰς by *ad*, and εἰς as=διὰ by *per*. E. *a. π.* seems=in a state of spiritual separation, spiritually separated.

[2] Obedience of faith, of the truth, verse 22. Rom. i. 5; xvi. 26; vi. 16, 17. Acts vi. 7.

[3] Ut obediant, et Jesu Christi sanguine conspergantur.—CASTALIO.

[4] Ch. i. 23. James i. 18. John iii. 3, &c. Fait renaitre, autrement, regenerez.—BEAUSOBRE.

[5] Amat Petrus Epitheton *vivus*.—BENGEL.

[6] Some MSS. of good note read ἡμᾶς, us.

[7] Guarded. Gal. iii. 23.

[8] Εἰς, till. Acts iv. 3. Phil. i. 10. Gal. iii. 13, 24. 1 Thess. iv. 15. We have a parallel phrase, 2 Peter ii. 4, *τηρουμένους εἰς κρίσιν*.

[9] By being bestowed.

[10] Ὧι cannot grammatically refer to *σωτηρίαν*. Even although it did, as that salvation is future, the rejoicing in it must be future too. HARWOOD takes this view of it.

[11] In quo exultabitis. VULGATE.

[12] Δοκίμιον is not=δοκιμή, Rom. v. 3; the last is the result of the first; both here and James i. 3, it seems=δοκιμασία.

[13] Explorata vestra fides.—CASTALIO. Your faith once tried.—COVERDALE. MATTHEWS.

[14] STEIGER, i. 136, 137. KNATCHBULL, 292.

even though proved by fire, perisheth), resulting in [1] praise,
and honor, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
8. whom, though you have not seen him, you love; in whom,
though now not looking on him but believing in him, you shall
9. rejoice with an unspeakable and triumphant joy,[2] receiving
10. the end of your faith, soul-salvation;[3] respecting which sal-
vation, prophets who uttered predictions concerning this grace
11. towards you, made inquiry and diligent search, examining
what, and what kind, of season,[4] the Spirit of Christ in them
did signify, when testifying beforehand of the sufferings in
12. reference to Christ,[5] and the succeeding glories; to whom it
was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were
ministering those things, which have now been declared to
you by those who, inspired by the Holy Spirit sent down from
Heaven, have proclaimed to you the good news; into which
things angels earnestly inquire.[6]
13. Seeing these things are so, girding up the loins of your
mind,[7] being watchful,[8] hope[9] steadfastly[10] for this grace, which
is to be brought to you in the revelation[11] of Jesus Christ.
14. As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves by your
15. former propensities in *your state of* ignorance, but in imita-
tion of the holy one, who has called you,[12] be you also holy in
16. your whole behavior: because it is written, 'Be ye holy, for
17. I am holy.' And since you call Father,[13] Him who judges the
work of every man without respect of persons, pass the time
18. of your sojourning in reverence *of him;* knowing that you
have been ransomed from your foolish[14] hereditary[15] course
19. of behavior, not by corruptible things—silver or gold—but
by precious blood,[16] as of a lamb, perfect and spotless, *the blood*
20. of Christ;[17] fore-appointed, indeed, before the foundation of

[1] Robinson. Εἰς. 3. *a.*

[2] Exultabitis lætitia inenarrabili et glorificata. Vulgate.

[3] Hoc perinde valet ac si diceretur: "salus æterna." Est enim tacita comparatio vitæ mortalis et caducæ quæ ad corpus pertinet. 1 Cor. v. 5. Ἵνα τό πνεῦμα σώθῃ.—Calvin.

[4] The period and the circumstances. Quo et quali tempore.—Jaspis. In relation to whom, and what time.—Purver. Quel tems, et quelle conjuncture.—Beausobre.

[5] Or the sufferings until Christ, that is, the manifold trials, till the revelation of Jesus Christ, v. 7.

[6] James i. 25.

[7] Lumbos succingimus ad iter, ad opus, ad bella, ad ministerium.—C. A. Lapide. Prepared, ready for work or warfare, for toil or travel.

[8] Vigilance, not moderation, seems the idea here. Awake to all events.

[9] Τελείως ἐλπίσατε=κατέχετε τὴν ἐλπίδα τελείαν; or, as the Apostle to the Hebrews has it, ch. iii. 6. Perfecte Sperate.—Vulgate.

[10] Or perseveringly, τελείως.

[11] At his second coming, when He shall be unveiled, manifested to be what he is. By the revelation.—Hammond. By the declaring.—Coverdale. Matthews. Cranmer. The figures here seem borrowed from Luke xii. 35, &c.

[12] Literally "according to." Rom. xv. 5. Κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, rendered in the margin "after the example of." Ad exemplum illius sancti qui vocavit vos.—Eras. Schmid.

[13] Call on the Father.

[14] Eph. iv. 17.

[15] Handed down from father to son.

[16] Ὡς=ut. ætiologia τοῦ *precioso*.—Bengel.

[17] For the rendering of this verse, which seems to me to bring out the apostle's precise sense very clearly and forcibly, I am indebted to my learned and ingenious colleague and much esteemed friend, the Rev. Dr. Eadie.

the world, but manifested in these last times, on account[1]
21. of you, who through him believe in God who raised him from
the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are
in God.[2]
22. Having purified your souls by the obedience of the truth,
through the Spirit,[3] so as sincerely from a pure heart, to love
23. the brethren, love one another intensely, being anew made the
children *of God*, not of a perishable race,[4] but of an imperish-
able, through the living word of God, which endureth forever;
24. for "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of it[5] as the flower
25. of grass; the grass withereth, and its flower falleth off, but
the word of the Lord endureth forever." Now the gospel
which has been proclaimed to you is this word.

II. 1. Laying aside, then, all malice, and all deceit, and simula-
2. tions, and envyings, and all evil-speakings, like new-born
babes, desire the unadulterated spiritual milk,[6] that by it you
3. may grow unto salvation;[7] seeing[8] you have tasted the good-
4. ness[9] of the Lord; coming to whom, *the* living stone, by men
5. disapproved, but by God chosen and honored, even you[10] as
living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood
to offer spiritual sacrifices well-pleasing to God, by Jesus
6. Christ; according to what is contained in the Scripture,
"Behold, I lay in Sion, a corner-stone, chosen, honored; and
7. he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed." To you
then who believe there is honor,[11] but to them who disbelieve,
there is dishonor; the stone which the builders disallowed, has
8. become the principal corner-stone, and a stumbling stone, and
a rock of offence, *on which* they who believe not the word
9. stumble, to which also they were appointed. But you *are* a
chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a

[1] On behalf of you.

[2] SYMONDS.

[3] Διὰ πνεύματος. The evidence of the genuineness of this clause is so deficient, that MILL, BENGEL, GRIESBACH, and LACHMANN, would omit it. If genuine, its meaning is doubtful. It may qualify ὑπακοῇ=πνευματικῇ.

[4] Σπορά, genus. proles. SCAPULA refers to Sophocles and Euripides, in support of this sense. The cognate word σπέρμα is often used in this way. John vii. 42; viii. 33, 37. Gal. iii. 16, 19, et al. If λόγος Θεοῦ be merely exegetical, would not the same preposition have been connected with it as with the word of which it is the interpretation?

[5] Αὐτῆς is the preferable reading.

[6] Rationale sine dolo lac.—VULGATE. That reasonable milk that is without corruption.—COVERDALE. MATTHEWS. The milk not of the body, but of the soul, which is without deceit.—CRANMER. The reasonable milk of the word, which is without deceit.—BISHOPS' BIBLE. The rational pure milk.—HAMMOND. Le lait spirituel, et tout pur.—MONS VERSION. Δογικόν, i. q. πνευματικόν. v. 5.—VATER. "Illis temporibus rex Messias apparebit synagogæ Israeliticæ ad quem Israelitæ sic dicent: veni, esto frater noster, et proficiscamur Hierosolyma et sugemus tecum gustum legis, quemadmodum infans ubera matris suæ sugit. TARGUM in Cant. viii. 1. Apud WETSTEIN.

[7] Εἰς σωτηρίαν is found in a number of the most ancient Codd., and is admitted into the text by the most distinguished critical editors of the New Testament.

[8] Quia.—CARPZOV. Et.—LACHMANN.

[9] Psal. xxxiv. 8.

[10] Parietes spirituales quia homines pii sunt præcipuum templum.—R. ALSCHECH in Hag. ii. 10. Ap. WETSTEIN.

[11] Vobis igitur honor credentibus.—VULGATE.

peculiar possession *to God*, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into his
10. marvellous light; who once were not a people, but now are the people of God; who once were not the objects of *his* mercy, but now are the objects of *his* mercy.
11. Beloved, I exhort you, as foreigners and sojourners, to keep
12. yourselves from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, conducting yourselves honorably among the heathen, that with regard to that in which they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may, from your good works,[1] having observed them, glorify
13. God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves therefore, from a regard to the Lord, to every institution of man,[2] for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of those who do
14. well; whether it be king as supreme, or governors as commis-
15. sioned by him; for thus is it the will of God, that doing well
16. you muzzle the ignorance of foolish men. As free men, yet not using your liberty as a cloak[3] of wickedness, but as the ser-
17. vants of God, honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the King.[4]
18. Servants, submit yourselves, with all reverence, to your masters, not only to the kind and gentle, but also to the per-
19. verse;[5] for this is well pleasing, if any one who suffers unjust-
20. ly, from religious principle endure his grievances patiently; for what credit is it if, when you commit a fault, and are chastised, you endure patiently? but if suffering while acting prop-
21. erly, you patiently endure, this is well pleasing to God. For to this were you called; because even Christ suffered on our account, leaving us foot-prints[6] that we should follow in his
22. steps, who committed no fault, and in whose mouth no deceit
23. was found; who, being reviled, did not revile in return, suffering did not threaten, but committed himself[7] to the righteous
24. judge; who himself, in his own body, bore our sins to the cross,[8] that we dying by sins might live by righteousness: by
25. whose weals[9] you are healed; for you were as straying sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd, and overseer[10] of your souls.

III. 1. Likewise, you wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands; that if some of them are disbelievers in the doctrine,

[1] Ex bonis operibus vos considerantes.—VULGATE. May revering *you* (ἐκ from), by your good works.—HAMMOND.

[2] Humanæ creaturæ.—VULGATE. Humanæ ordinationi.—BEZA. Creature of man.—WICLIF. Humane creature.—RHEMISTS. HAMMOND.

[3] A covering of, a pretext for. Use it neither for concealing nor for excusing wickedness.

[4] The Roman emperor is termed *βασιλεὺς* by the Greek writers. POLYÆNI Strag., p. 1. HEROD. i. 3. The usage of the Jews appears from John xix. 15. Acts xvii. 7.

[5] Cross, ill-conditioned, morose, wayward. Tyrants.—WICLIF.

[6] WAKEFIELD. 1 John ii. 6.

[7] Resigned himself.—SYMONDS.

[8] Lit. Stake, Timber. Ἐπί. ROBINSON in verb. iii. 6. *α* and *β*.

[9] Μώλωψ non est vulnus sed vibex, sive vestigium verberum aut flagellorum, Πληγὴ μάστιγος ποιεῖ μώλωπας. Ecclus. xxviii. 17.—RAPHELIUS.

[10] Curatorem.—BEZA. CASTALIO.

2. they may, without the doctrine,[1] be won over by contempla-
3. ting your pious, chaste behavior. Let your adorning not be
the outward adorning of plaited hair, or of golden ornaments,
4. or of curious dress; but let the hidden man of the heart *be*
adorned with the imperishable *ornament* of that meek and quiet
5. spirit, which, in the estimation of God, is of great value.[2] For
even thus, of old, the holy women who trusted in God adorned
6. themselves, submitting themselves to their own husbands (as
Sarah, whose children you are, obeyed Abraham, calling him
Lord[3]), doing what is good, and alarmed by no terrors.
7. Likewise, you husbands, dwell with your wives with a wise
consideration of the greater weakness of the female frame;
giving them honor as also fellow-heirs of the gracious gift of
life, that your prayers may not be hindered.
8. Finally, be all of one mind and one heart,[4] love as brethren.
9. Be compassionate, be courteous. Do not render injury for in-
jury, or railing for railing; but, on the contrary, bless, know-
ing that you are called to this, that you may obtain a blessing:
10. "For as to him who wishes to enjoy life[5] and to see good
days, let him restrain his tongue from mischief, and his lips
11. from speaking deceit; let him depart from mischief and do
12. good, let him seek peace and pursue it; for the eyes of the
Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears towards their prayer;
13. but the face of the Lord is against[6] evil-doers." And who
14. shall harm[7] you if you are imitators of Him who is good?[8] But
even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed.
15. Be not then afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanc-
tify the Lord God in your hearts. And be always ready to vin-
dicate, with meekness and reverence, your hope to every one
16. who asks of you an account of it, maintaining a good con-
science, in order that in the thing regarding which they speak
against you as evil-doers, those who slander your good chris-
17. tian behavior may be put to shame. For it is better that you
should suffer, if so be the will of God, doing good rather than
doing evil.[9]
18. For, even Christ, once on account of sins, suffered, the right-
eous in the room of the unrighteous, that he might bring us to
God; having become, dead, with respect to the flesh, but,

[1] As the article is wanting, *a.* λ. may not refer to *τ.* λ., but may mean without discourse or discussion.

[2] Much set by.—COVERDALE. GENEVA. MATTHEWS.

[3] CARPZOV. WAKEFIELD. Gal. iv. 31. Gen. xii. 13, 15; xx. 2; xxvi. 7. Prov. iii. 25. Ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι non cum vocabulo *τέκνα* construendum, sed ex v. 5, *αἱ γυναῖκες* huic referendum est.—SCHOETGEN.

[4] Be united in judgment and affection. Unanimes, compatientes.—VULGATE. Unanimes, eodem modo affecti.—CASTALIO. Omnes eodem animo, eodem affectu.—CARPZOV.

[5] BENSON. The opposite of *ἀγαπᾷν ζωὴν* is *μισεῖν ζωήν*. Ecc. ii. 17. Desireth to live.—SYMONDS.

[6] Ἐπί on.—WICLIF. Beholdeth.—COVERDALE. MATTHEWS. Upon.—GENEVA. RHEMISTS. Mali huic non latent.—CAMERARIUS.

[7] Hurt.—SYMONDS.

[8] WYNNE.

[9] Melius enim est ut bene agentes, si ita velit Dei voluntas, aliquid patiamini, quam male agentes.—BEZA.

19. quickened, with respect to the Spirit, whereby he went and
20. preached even to the spirits in prison, who were in former times disbelieving, when the patience of God continued waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, in which
21. a few—that is, eight—souls were saved by water, which also now—the anti-type baptism—saves us, not as the removal of the filth of the flesh,[1] but as the profession of a good conscience
22. towards God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having passed into heaven, angels, and authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

IV. 1. Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh, do you even arm yourselves with this same thought[2]—'that he who hath
2. suffered in the flesh hath been made to rest from sin,'—in order to the living the remainder of the time in the flesh, not accord-
3. ing to the lusts of men, but according to the will of God; for the time that is past is enough for us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, having walked in impurities, in lusts, in intoxication, in revels, in carousings, and lawless idolatrous rites;
4. wherein they think it strange that you run not with them, into
5. the same mire of profligacy, speaking evil of you; these[3] shall render an account to Him who is in readiness[4] to judge[5] the
6. living and the dead; for, for this purpose also was the gospel preached to the dead, that as to man they might be judged in the flesh, but as to God might live in the Spirit.
7. Now the end of all things is at hand;[6] be, therefore, prudent
8. and watchful with regard to prayers. But, above all things, have a fervent love of each other; for this love will cover a
9. multitude of faults. Be hospitable to each other without
10. grudgings; as good stewards of the manifold kindness of God, let every one employ the gift he has received for mutual ser-
11. vice (if any one speak as oracles of God,[7] if any one minister as of the ability God has bestowed[8]), that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, who is the[9] glory and the power forever and ever, Amen.
12. Beloved, be not surprised at the scorching[10] among you which is coming for your trial, as at some strange thing hap-
13. pening to you; but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers in the sufferings of Christ, that you may also rejoice with ex-
14. ultation at the revelation of his glory. If you suffer reproach in Christ's name, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of power,[11] even the *spirit* of God, resteth on you; with regard

[1] Baptismus non ei rei servit, cui balnea sufficiunt.—Deylingius.
[2] Cogitatione.—Vulgate. Armez-vous de cette pensée que, &c.—Mons Version.
[3] Robinson. ὃς, ἥ, ὅ 2, a. β. And thei schulen give resoun to hym.—Wiclif.
[4] 2 Cor. x. 6. Ἔχειν ἐν ἑτοίμῳ.
[5] Inflict righteous judgment on.
[6] James v. 8, 9.
[7] Ὡς *veritatis*. What are, indeed, divine oracles—speaking as the ἑρμηνεὺς of God.
[8] Of the ability which God has really given him, as a divinely-qualified minister.
[9] Cui est.—Vulgate.
[10] Prov. xxvii. 21; lxx. 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14. Apoc. xviii. 19.
[11] Δυνάμεως is introduced into the text by Griesbach, Matthaei, and Lachmann.

to them there is reproach, but with regard to you there is
15. glory.[1] But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a
16. thief, or an evil-doer, or as an intermeddler;[2] but if *any suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him
17. glorify God on this account.[3] For it is the time of the commencement of the judgment from the house of God; and if the beginning be from us, what will be the issue[4] with those
18. who disbelieve the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be delivered, where shall the ungodly and sinner ap-
19. pear? Wherefore let even[5] those who suffer, according to the will of God, in well doing commit their souls *to Him*, who is[6] a faithful Creator.

V. 1. To the elders among you, I who am a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a sharer in the glory
2. that is about to be revealed, give this exhortation. Act as shepherds to the flock of God that is among you,[7] superintending them, not reluctantly, but willingly; not from a sordid love
3. of gain, but from a spirit of zeal; neither lording it over the
4. allotted portions,[8] but being patterns for the flock;[9] and when the chief shepherd[10] appears, you shall receive the unfading
5. crown of glory. In like manner, you juniors, submit yourselves to the elders,[11] and all of you being subject to each other, be girdled with humility;[12] for God opposes the haughty, but to the humble he shows favor.
6. Humble yourselves, then, under the mighty hand of God,
7. that he may exalt you in due season:[13] casting all your anxiety on Him, for he cares for you.
8. Be sober, be wakeful; your adversary the devil, like a roar-
9. ing lion, is going about seeking whom he may devour; Him resist, standing fast in the faith,[14] knowing that the same kinds of suffering are accomplished in your brotherhood while in
10. the world. But the God of all grace who has called you to his

[1] They will reproach, but you will be honored. This clause is of doubtful authority. GRIESBACH and LACHMANN omit it.

[2] Alienorum appetitor.—VULGATE. Rerum ad se non pertinentium curiosus inspector.—ERASM. SCHMID.

[3] 2 Cor. iii. 10; ix. 3.

[4] Finis *judicii*.—ERAS. SCHMID.

[5] Κάι, *etiam*, concessivé cum participio, idem quod εἰ καὶ *et si* cum verbo: εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε ch. iii. 14. Non debemus ex passione diffidentiam capere.—BENGEL.

[6] Ὡς ἀληθῶς HESYCHIUS. Revera, vere SCHLEUSNER. Answering to the Heb. *Caph veritatis*. Neh. vii. 2. Hos. v. 10; lxx. John i. 14.

[7] As much as lieth in you.—CRANMER.

[8] The clergy.—WICLIF. RHEMISTS. The parishes.—COVERDALE. MATTHEWS. CRANMER. Your charges.—HAMMOND.

[9] THEOPHYLACT and ŒCUMENIUS consider καὶ as an αἰτιολογικὸς σύνδεσμος.

[10] Prince of shepherds.—WICLIF. Prince of pastors.—RHEMISTS.

[11] The Syriac version has "your elders," which shows us how its author understood νεώτεροι.

[12] Put on humility as your badge.—HAMMOND.

[13] 1 Tim. vi. 15. 2 Cor. vi. 2. Whether here or hereafter, certainly at a seasonable time.—STEIGER.

[14] Erga diffidentes robur habet, erga fideles imbellis est.—BULLINGER.

eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little,
shall himself[1] make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you;[2]
11. His *is*[3] the glory and the power, forever and ever. Amen.
12. By Silvanus, to you a faithful brother, as I judge, I have briefly
written, exhorting *you*, and testifying *to you* that this is the
13. true grace of God, with regard to which do you stand.[4] *The*
church[5] in Babylon, chosen as you are, saluteth you; also
14. Marcus, my son. Salute each other with a kiss of love. Peace
be with you all who are in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

[1] Phil. i. 6.

[2] The elder English versions—COVERDALE, MATTHEWS, and CRANMER—render this in the future; and the reading on which this rendering rests, that of the Vulgate, is recognized by GRIESBACH, SCHOLZ, and LACHMANN, as genuine. Digna Petro oratio: confirmat suos fratres.—BENGEL.

[3] If, as is generally admitted, the verbs in the previous verse be in the future, *is* seems a more suitable supplement than *be*.

[4] Στῆτε.—LACHMANN. See the authorities in GRIESBACH and SCHOLZ.

[5] Literally *she*, that is, either ἐκκλησία or δικσπορά.

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE AUTHOR—THE ADDRESS—AND THE SALUTATION.

1 Peter i. 1, 2.—Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

INTRODUCTION.

The Holy Scriptures—the inspired record of the revealed will of God—are not occupied with a systematic view of religious and moral truth and duty, but consist of a great variety of separate treatises, some of them historical, others didactic, others prophetical, most of them written in prose, though some of them in verse, composed at irregular intervals during a period of fifteen hundred years, and generally having a peculiar reference to the circumstances of those to whom they were originally addressed. The miscellaneous and occasional character thus impressed on the sacred writings, like everything else about them, bears in it indications of their divine origin. It prevents the appearance of human art or contrivance; proves that the harmony which prevails in them could not be the result of a preconcerted plan on the part of the writers; and leads us to inquire for a reason—which can only be found in the fact that they were given by the inspiration of Him who is "the only wise God"—why writings, so plainly occasional in their origin, should, notwithstanding, be so well fitted to serve the purpose of a universal and permanent rule of religious belief and moral conduct.

A considerable part of the second volume of the inspired writings—the Christian Scriptures—consists of letters, addressed by Apostles of Christ, some of them to individual Christians, most of them to bodies of Christians resident in particular cities or districts. These epistles form one of the most valuable portions of the Book of God. They embody in them much evidence, in a peculiarly satisfactory form, of the truth of the Gospel history, and of the divine origin of

Christianity; they contain in them the full development of the Christian doctrine, given by men on whom, according to His promise, the exalted Redeemer had conferred the Holy Spirit, "to guide them into all the truth;" they give us a striking exhibition of the living spirit of Christianity, and its influence on the formation of character, both in the writers of the epistles and in those to whom they are addressed; they present us with authentic information in reference to the constitution, government, and worship of the primitive Church; and they furnish, in the most useful and impressive form, a complete code of Christian morals.

Among these apostolical letters, the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter has always held a high place in the estimation of the Church. Their opinion cannot be better expressed than in the words of the heavenly Leighton: "This excellent epistle, full of evangelical doctrine and apostolical authority, is a brief and yet very clear summary, both of the consolations and instructions needful for the encouragement and direction of a Christian in his journey to heaven; elevating his thoughts and desires to that happiness, and strengthening him against all opposition in the way, both that of corruption within, and temptation and afflictions from without. The heads of doctrine contained in it are many; but the main that are most insisted on, are these three —Faith, Obedience, and Patience—to establish them in believing, to direct them in doing, and to comfort them in suffering."[1]

The authenticity and genuineness of the Epistle, and its apostolic origin and consequent divine inspiration, rest on the most satisfactory evidence. It is alluded to in the second epistle bearing Peter's name; the great antiquity of which is undoubted, though its canonical authority has been questioned. It is plainly referred to by the earliest Christian writers, as Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenæus; and Eusebius ranks it among the books universally admitted to belong to the sacred canon. The doubts which have been thrown out by certain German critics, in later times, have obviously originated in the very wantonness of scepticism, and but little deserve the grave discussion and elaborate refutation they have received from sounder scholars.

Like the letters of Paul, this composition holds a middle place between the treatise or discourse and the familiar epistle. It is not, like the epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, principally occupied with one great doctrinal theme. It more resembles the minor Pauline epistles, with this difference, that the doctrinal and the practical statements are more commingled. There is comparatively little discussion or argument in it. It is—as the author himself describes it (ch. v. 12)—a testimony and an exhortation.[2]

The natural warmth of the author's disposition[3] gives to the style a character of energy approaching to vehemence; and there is to be found just such a familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures,

[1] Epistolam profecto dignam apostolorum principe, plenam auctoritatis ac majestatis apostolicæ, verbis parcam, sententiis differtam.—ERASMUS. Habet hæc epistola τὸ σφυδρὸν conveniens ingenio principis apostolorum.—GROTIUS. Mirabilis est gravitas et alacritas Petrini sermonis, suavissime retinens lectorem.—BENGEL.

[2] Παρακαλῶν καὶ ἐπιμαρτυρῶν. [3] Chrysostom terms him Ὁ παντα χοῦ Θερμός.

manifesting itself not only in direct quotations, but in numerous natural allusions, which have all the appearance of having been unconscious, as might be expected in the composition of a pious, though, when compared with Paul, an unlettered Jew.[1]

This epistle is distinguished for great tenderness of manner, and for bringing forward prominently the most consolatory parts of the Gospel. The apostle "wrote to those who were in affliction. He was himself an old man. He expected soon to be with the Saviour. He had nearly done with the conflicts and toils of life. It was natural that he should direct his eye onward and upward, and dwell on those things in the Gospel which were adapted to support and comfort the soul. There is, therefore, scarcely any part of the New Testament where the ripe and mellow Christian will find more that is adapted to his matured feelings, or to which he will more naturally turn."

There is great compactness of thought and terseness of expression in this epistle. It seems to be composed of a succession of texts, each one fitted to constitute the subject of a discourse. There is more that a pastor would like to preach on in a course of expository lectures, and less that he would be disposed to pass over as not so well adapted to the purposes of religious instruction, than in almost any other book of the New Testament. There is almost nothing that is of merely local or temporary interest. There are no discussions about points pertaining to Jewish customs, such as we meet in (most of) Paul's epistles. There is little that pertains particularly to one city or country. Almost all is of universal applicability to Christians, and may be read with as much interest and profit now by us, as by those to whom the epistle was addressed.[2]

There are plain traces in the epistle of an intimate acquaintance with the modes of thought and expression characteristic of the writings of Paul, which, even without the references in the second epistle (ch. iii. 14, 15), would have led to the conclusion that the writer had read that apostle's epistles.[3] Peter's mode of writing is much less than Paul's that of a scholar; but he has much of the same natural ease of diction, tendency to digression, and use of figurative language.

This epistle holds an intermediate place between those of the great apostle of the Gentiles, and that of James the apostle of the Circumcision. It resembles both in a greater degree than they resemble each other.[4]

With respect to the time when this epistle was written, we have not the means of arriving at absolute certainty. The probability seems to be, that its true date is about A.D. 65, the eleventh year of Nero's reign, two or three years before the apostle's martyrdom, which is generally supposed to have taken place A.D. 67.[5]

It may be proper here to say a word as to the meaning of the epithet General or Catholic, which, since the fourth century, has been given to this epistle, as well as to the second epistle of Peter, and the epistles of James, John, and Jude. This is not a question of vital importance

[1] See note A. [2] Barnes. [3] See note B. [4] See note C.
[5] Hug's Introduction, sect. clxiii.; Steiger's Exposition, i. 33; Kitto's Cyclopædia; Michaelis' Introduction, iv. 325.

(for the appellation has no claim to divine authority), and it is well it is so, for there seems no means of determining it with anything like certainty. The term appears originally to have meant an epistle, directed not to one church, but to all, or at any rate to many churches, —a description which belongs to five of the seven epistles so distinguished; the other two being addressed to individuals. In the time of Eusebius, with this sense seems to have been connected the somewhat cognate one, of epistles publicly read in many, or all, the churches, on account of the excellence and usefulness of their contents; and, till the writings of the New Testament were collected into one volume, it appears to have been the technical name by which this collection of epistles was distinguished from the Pauline Epistles.[1]

The object of the apostle in this epistle is plainly to confirm the disciples in the faith, profession, and obedience of the Gospel; by deepening their conviction that the source of happiness, and the foundation of the everlasting kingdom of God, were contained in that faith of the Redeemer which had been announced to them, and received by them into their hearts; that that doctrine was indeed the everlasting unchangeable word of God, and that, therefore, they ought to aim at appropriating it with childlike simplicity, that so they might continually advance towards "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" and to exhort them to maintain their steadfastness in the faith under all persecutions, and a corresponding course of conduct, by which they would "shine as lights in the world," and refute the false accusations against Christianity and Christians.[2]

It is my intention, "if the Lord will," to lay before you, at irregular intervals, a series of expository discourses on this "weighty and powerful" epistle, and the passage which I have read shall form the subject of the first of these discourses.

These verses contain the inscription and the salutation, according to the ordinary usage of the apostolical epistles; and naturally lead us to speak, I. Of the writer of the epistle—"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ;" II. Of those to whom the epistle is addressed—"The elect strangers of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—elect according to the foreknowledge of God, by a spiritual sanctification, to obedience and to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" and, III. Of the benevolent wish which he expresses, or the solemn prayer which he presents for them—"Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

I. OF THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLE.

The writer of this epistle, whose original name was Simon, was a native of Bethsaida, at that time an inconsiderable village on the western shore of the sea of Galilee. He was bred to the occupation

[1] Euseb. H. E. ii. 23; Nœsselti Opuscula, fasc. ii.; Michaelis; Hug; Schott; De Wette.

[2] Neander.

of a fisherman, which seems to have been the family profession; and at the time of his becoming acquainted with Jesus Christ, he was married, and had removed with his family to Capernaum. His brother Andrew, who was a disciple of John the Baptist, having heard his master pronounce Jesus, whom he had lately baptized, "the Lamb of God," solicited an interview with him, which ended in his conviction that he was indeed the great deliverer, concerning whom the ancient prophets had uttered so many glorious predictions, and whose appearance, without delay, was at this period generally expected by the Jews. He communicated the joyful intelligence to his brother Simon, whom he introduced to Jesus. He also appears to have become from that day a believer; and, in the exercise of that knowledge of the secrets of the heart and of futurity by which he was distinguished, Jesus, in reference to the dispositions he should discover, and the services he should perform, surnamed him Cephas, or Petros—the one a Chaldæo-Syriac, the other a Greek word—both signifying a *stone* or *rock*.

For some time after this, these two brothers continued to follow their profession as fishermen. But one day Jesus, after having confirmed their faith by a miraculous draught of fishes, which he intimated was emblematical of the vast multitudes who, through their instrumentality, were to become his followers, required their constant attendance on him; and when he soon afterwards selected twelve of his disciples, whom he termed apostles, and intrusted with miraculous powers, we find Peter's name holding the first place in the list. He obviously from the beginning was "among the chief of the apostles," and occupied a high place, comparatively as well as really, in his Master's esteem and affection. Of this we have satisfactory evidence in his being, along with John and James, the sons of Zebedee, chosen to witness his Lord's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, and his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

None of the apostles was more firmly persuaded of the divinity of Jesus' mission, more affectionately attached to his person, or more zealously devoted to his cause. When many of his disciples who had expected from the Messiah a worldly kingdom, became offended with a discourse in which he had intimated that the blessings he came to procure and bestow were of a heavenly kind, and "went back, and walked no more with him," Jesus turned to his little chosen band, and asked them the touching question, "Will ye also go away?" Peter exclaimed, "To whom can we go but to thee? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we know and art sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." On another occasion, when our Lord, having inquired of his disciples what were the opinions generally entertained of him by his countrymen, put the question to them, "Who say ye that I am?" Peter immediately replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." His warm attachment to his Lord was as strongly, though not so wisely, manifested, in his dissuading him from submitting to suffering and death, in his refusing to allow him to wash his feet, im his declaration that, though he should die with him, he would never deny him, in his singly drawing his sword against a numerous body of armed men in his defence, and

in his persisting to follow him when the rest of the disciples had forsaken him and fled.

To teach Peter his own weakness, he was permitted to fall before the temptations to which he had rashly exposed himself. Thrice in the course of a very short period he denied, with execrations, that he knew *Him* for whom he had so lately, both by words and deeds, shown that he was then ready to lay down his life. The fact is recorded, not for Peter's shame, but for our instruction; and it proclaims—"Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall;" "be not high-minded, but fear;" "without Christ ye can do nothing."

"Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,
'I never will deny my Lord;'
But 'grant I never may.'"

When our Lord, in the midst of his sufferings, cast on his recreant disciple a look of wounded but unchanging affection, he "came to himself," and, stung to the heart at the thought of his base ingratitude, hastened into solitude, and "wept bitterly."

It is a striking proof of Jesus' peculiar affection to our apostle, that in the message he sent by the angel to his disciples by Mary Magdalene, to whom he first appeared after his resurrection, Peter is particularly mentioned. "Go tell the disciples, and Peter." This token of kindness was not lost on him. He ran immediately to the sepulchre, and went into it to ascertain that the body was indeed not there; and he had the high honor of being the first among the apostles who saw his risen Redeemer, though we have no particular account of the interview.

Some time after the resurrection, our Lord gave Peter a most overwhelming proof of his regard, and afforded him an honorable opportunity of manifesting, in the presence of his brethren, his unabated love for his Master, and his increased distrust of himself. It would be injustice to tell the story in other words than those of the inspired historian, John xxi. 15–19. "So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."

Peter was present with his brethren on that memorable day, when Jesus "led them out as far as to Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them; and while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Not one of them gazed with a more eager eye upward till the form of the Saviour vanished in the cloud of glory, or with a heart more full of solemn gladness returned to Jerusalem.

Immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, Peter was honored to open the gates of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, by preaching the first Gospel sermon properly so called, and that sermon was blessed to the conversion of three thousand souls.

After having, along with John, performed a miracle of healing, he delivered an eloquent and convincing discourse, by means of which multitudes were induced to embrace the Gospel; and when brought before the council, he showed how completely our Lord's promise had been performed, that he would give to his apostles "a spirit and a wisdom which all their adversaries would be unable to resist."

At his reproof Ananias and Sapphira, who had attempted to impose on the apostles, were struck with instantaneous death.

Many of the Samaritans having embraced Christianity in consequence of the preaching of Philip, Peter visited them, and by the laying on of his hands they received the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. We find him afterwards at Lydda, healing Eneas, who had been eight years confined to his bed by palsy; and at Joppa raising Tabitha from the dead.

He who had opened the gate of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, was called on also, in the case of the centurion Cornelius and his family, to open the same gate to the Gentiles. In consequence of a divine mission he preached to them the Gospel, and while he was preaching it, "the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace," and shed forth on them abundantly the Holy Ghost.

On his return to Jerusalem, Herod Agrippa cast him into prison with the intention of putting him to death by public execution, but he was miraculously delivered by an angel, and restored to liberty.

At the meeting of what is ordinarily termed the council or synod of Jerusalem, Peter strongly asserted the freedom of believing Gentiles from all obligation to observe the law of Moses, and urged the circumstances of the conversion of Cornelius and his family, as an irrefragable proof of the doctrine which he taught on that subject. Some time after this, being at Antioch, he acted on this liberal principle, by maintaining an unrestricted freedom of intercourse with the converted Gentiles, till a fear of offending some Jewish Christians, zealous for the law, induced him, from a mistaken notion of expediency, to "withdraw himself." This inconsistent, rather than unprincipled, conduct drew on him the honest reproof of the apostle Paul, who in a very convincing manner showed that his fellow-apostle was now contradicting by action what he had asserted in words, and building up again what he had destroyed.

We have no further account of the apostle Peter in the New Testament. A careful attention to the hints met with in authentic church history, has led the best informed writers to believe, that, havin

turned to Judea from Antioch, he remained at Jerusalem for some years, and that he then returned into Syria, and from thence visited those provinces mentioned in the inscription of this epistle, and formed an acquaintance with those churches for whose edification his two epistles were intended. On leaving these parts, he probably went into the Parthian empire, where he appears to have been laboring when this epistle was written.

The remaining history of the apostle is involved in obscurity. It is not impossible that he went to Rome after Paul had left it for the last time; and there, now an old man, sealed his testimony with his blood, and obtained the crown of martyrdom, being put to death by the order of the inhuman Nero. It is storied that he was crucified with his head downward—himself observing with characteristic affection and humility, "that he was unworthy of the honor of being crucified in the same way as his Master was."[1] This observation, savoring so much more of the morbid piety of what is called ancient Christianity, than of simple apostolic humility, goes far to discredit the whole story. It seems certain, however, that he was crucified, and that thus was the enigmatic prophecy of our Lord explained by its fulfilment, in which he signified by what death Peter should glorify God—John xxi. 18, 19, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."

Such is a short outline of the more important facts known in reference to the venerable writer of this epistle.[2]

Peter describes himself as an "Apostle of Jesus Christ." The word apostle signifies a person sent by another, a messenger. The term is, in the New Testament, generally employed as the descriptive appellation of a comparatively small class of men to whom Jesus Christ intrusted the organization of his Church, and the dissemination of his religion among mankind. At an early period of his ministry "he ordained twelve" of his disciples, "that they should be with him." These he named apostles. Some time afterwards, "he gave to them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease;" and "he sent them to preach the kingdom of God."[3] To them he gave "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and constituted them princes over the spiritual Israel, that people whom God was to take "from among" the Jews and "the Gentiles for his name."[4] Previously to his death he promised them the Holy Spirit, to fit them to be the founders and governors of the Christian Church.[5] After his resurrection, he solemnly confirmed their call, saying, "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you;"[6] and gave them a commission

[1] Clem. Rom. Ep. 1 ad Corinth. c. v. Euseb. H. E. ii. 25, iii. 1. Chron. ad an. xiv. Neronis. Lactant. de mort. persecut., c. ii. Inst. div. iv. 21.

[2] For the authorities of the above statement, see note D.

[3] Mark iii. 14. Matt. x. 1–5. Mark vi. 7. Luke vi. 13; ix. 1.

[4] Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18; xix. 28. Luke xxii. 30.

[5] John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xv. 26, 27; xvi. 7–15.

[6] Καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέ με ὁ Πατὴρ, κἀγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς.

to "preach the Gospel to every creature."[1] After his ascension, he, on the Day of Pentecost, communicated to them thosesupernatural gifts which were necessary to the performance of the high functions he had commissioned them to discharge; and in the exercise of these gifts, they, in the Gospel history, and in their epistles, with the apocalypse, gave a complete view of the will of their Master, in reference to that new order of things of which he was the author. They "had the mind of Christ." They spoke "the wisdom of God in a mystery." That mystery "God revealed to them by his Spirit," and they spoke it "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." They were "ambassadors for Christ," and besought men "in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." They authoritatively taught the doctrine and law of the Lord; they organized Churches, and required them to "keep the traditions," that is, the doctrines and ordinances "delivered to them."[2]

The characteristic features of the apostles as official men were, that they had seen the Lord, and been eye and ear witnesses of what they testified to the world;[3] that they had been called and chosen *immediately* by Christ;[4] that they were infallibly inspired to declare his doctrine and laws;[5] that they possessed the power of working miracles;[6] and that their commission was, strictly speaking, catholic, extending to the whole Church,—to the whole world.[7]

It must be obvious, from this scriptural account of the apostolical office, that the apostles had—could have, in the strict sense of the term—no successors. Their qualifications were supernatural, and their work once performed, remains in the infallible record of the New Testament for the advantage of the Church and the world in all future ages. They are the only authoritative teachers of Christian doctrine and law. All official men in Christian churches can legitimately claim no higher place than that of expounders of the doctrines, and administrators of the laws, found in their writings. Few things have been more injurious to the cause of Christianity, than the assumption, on the part of ordinary office-bearers in the Church, of the peculiar prerogatives of "the holy Apostles of our Lord Jesus." Much that is said of the latter is not at all applicable to the former, and much that admits of being thus applied, can be so, in accordance with truth, only in a very secondary and extenuated sense.[8]

To this, the highest and holiest office ever held by mere man, the author of this epistle had been called by his Master; and it appears that, in the exercise of its important functions, his labors were chiefly, though not exclusively, devoted to his "brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh."[9] Though there is no ground for the assertion,

[1] John xx. 21–23. Matt. xviii. 18–20.
[2] Acts ii. 1 Cor. ii. 16; ii. 7, 10, 13. 2 Cor. v. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 2.
[3] John xv. 27. Acts i. 21, 22. 1 Cor. xv. 8; ix. 1. Acts xxii. 14, 15.
[4] Luke vi. 13. Gal. i. 1.
[5] John xvi. 13. 1 Cor. ii. 10. Gal. i. 11, 12. John xiv. 26.
[6] Mark xvi. 20. Acts ii. 43. 1 Cor. xii. 8–11. 2 Cor. xii. 12.
[7] 2 Cor. xi. 28. Acts xvi. 4. 1 Cor. v. 3–6. 2 Cor. x. 8; xiii. 10.
[8] *Vide* Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, Lect. v; Kitto's Cyclopædia of Bib. Lit. vol. i. p. 179, &c.
[9] Gal. ii. 8, 9.

that Peter was the Prince of the Apostles, or had even a permanent presidency among them, yet there can be no doubt he stood very high in the estimation of his brethren—was among those who "seemed to be pillars,"—"the very chiefest apostles." [1]

II. OF THOSE TO WHOM THE EPISTLE IS ADDRESSED.

The persons to whom the epistle is addressed, come next to be considered. They are described first, generally, as "elect," or chosen, and then, particularly, both as to their external circumstances and to their spiritual state and character. With regard to the former, they are "the strangers scattered abroad, throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." With regard to the latter, they are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

It has been, and is a question among expositors, who are the persons to whom this epistle is addressed. It is plainly addressed to Christians, and to Christians resident in the countries specified; but, according to one class of interpreters, it is addressed to the Jewish converts resident in these regions; by another class, it is considered as addressed to the Gentile converts resident there; by a third class, it is considered as addressed to those who are called "proselytes of the gate,"—persons by birth Gentiles, but who had embraced Judaism, and had afterwards been converted to Christianity.

We apprehend that the true view of the matter is, that the Epistle was addressed to the Christian converts generally, whether Jews or Gentiles, residing in the countries mentioned. As a majority of these were Jews, and as Peter was not only a Jew, but the Apostle of the Circumcision, it is not wonderful that the circumstances and duties of the persons addressed are spoken of, so frequently, I had almost said, so uniformly, in language referring to the peculiarities of the Jewish economy.[2]

These persons are described,—first, generally as "elect" or chosen. It appears to me a doctrine not only very plainly revealed in Scripture, but necessarily resulting from the principles of natural religion, that all who enjoy the blessings of Christianity, the saving benefits of pardon, sanctification, and eternal life, do so in consequence of the sovereign free love of God, which, like himself, is necessarily eternal; or, in other words, were elected from unbeginning ages to the happiness bestowed on them. This doctrine is taught with peculiar plainness in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, 3–5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

[1] Gal. ii. 9. 2 Cor. xi. 5.

[2] *Vide* Michaelis' Introduction, by Marsh, vol. iv. 315–325; Schott Isagoge in lib. N. F. Sac. p. 403. For a particular account of the countries here referred to, *vide* Steiger Exp. of the First Ep. of Peter, Introd. sec. 6, vol. i. pp. 14–19.

At the same time, I apprehend, the word "elect" here, and in a number of other places in the New Testament, does not refer directly to what has been termed the electing decree,[1] but to the manifestation of it in the actually *selecting* certain individuals from amidst a world lying in wickedness, that they may be set apart to God, and become his peculiar people. The remark of Leighton appears to me very judicious: "Election here means the selecting them out of the world and joining them to the fellowship of the people of God." This is the election which our Lord speaks of when he says, "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen"[2]—selected—"you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you;"[3] and the apostle Paul plainly speaks of the election and the vocation of the Corinthians, as the same thing. "Ye see your calling—for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."[4] As Israel, as a nation, was selected to be a peculiar people to Jehovah, so true Christians are, as individuals, selected to be a part of God's spiritual "purchased inheritance," or peculiar people.

These selected or chosen persons are described, first, as to their external condition. They are represented as "strangers[5] scattered abroad." The appellation is borrowed from the term generally given to Jews dwelling in Gentile lands.[6] The situation of Christians, while on earth, does not resemble that of Israel dwelling in peace and security in Canaan, but that of Israelites sojourning among strangers and enemies. The selected people of God, while here below, are not gathered into one place, assembled together as citizens of the same city—children of the same family. They will be so by-and-by, but now they are "strangers," "pilgrims," "sojourners," being a small minority among a people whose habits of thought and feeling, whose pursuits and whose pleasures, are altogether alien from theirs; and "scattered" strangers, as being not merely far from home, but often far from each other, and but imperfectly enjoying the comfort and support arising from intimate communion with persons of kindred sentiments and affections. Such was the external state of the Christians to whom this epistle was addressed—such is the external state of true Christians still.

The particular description of the spiritual state of these selected and dispersed strangers now requires our attention. They are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God"—they are "elect through sanctification of the spirit"—they are "elect to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."

They are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God."[7] Here is the doctrine of election very plainly stated. They were selected

[1] Ἡ κατ' ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις.—Rom. ix. 11.
[2] John xv. 19.
[3] See note E.
[4] 1 Cor. i. 26–29.
[5] Παρεπιδήμοις. The word expresses two ideas: not natives of the country in which they are; not settled residents in that foreign country.
[6] Ἡ διασπορά.—John vii. 35.
[7] See note F.

from the rest of mankind, not because they were better than others. They were selected in accordance with the sovereign will of Him "to whom all his works are known from the beginning of the world." They are the "called" or chosen "according to his purpose;" and the purpose in reference to his choice of them stands, 'not of works, but of him that calleth." No cause can be assigned for them being selected rather than others, but the sovereign free love of God. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; he hath compassion on whom he will have compassion." When the Lord set his love on Israel, and chose them to be his peculiar people, the cause was not in them, but in himself; it was just because he loved them—"because he had a delight in them to love them;" and it is equally true that the selection of certain individuals to enjoy the better blessings of the better economy, can be traced by us to nothing but the sovereign kindness of Him who "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will."[1]

They are "elect through sanctification of the spirit." Sanctification means here, as usually in the New Testament, separation—setting apart; and sanctification of the spirit[2] means spiritual separation, as exposed to external or bodily separation.[3] When Israel was chosen to be God's peculiar people, in being separated from all nations, they were marked by a great variety of external distinctions. They lived in a country of their own, were distinguished by peculiar civil laws and customs, and were warned to abstain from all intimate intercourse of any kind with the surrounding nations. The peculiar people of God, under the new dispensation, are also separated from the rest of mankind: but their separation is of a spiritual kind. They are separated from them not civilly, but religiously—separated from them in their sentiments and affections. Spiritually they "come out from the world, and are separate;" but in reference to the affairs of this world, they are not a separate society.[4]

They are "elect, according to the divine foreknowledge, and by this spiritual separation to obedience."[5] The full expression is "the obedience of faith," or the obedience of the truth; and to obey the faith or the truth, is just to believe the Gospel and live under its influence. That the New Testament writers use the word "obedience" simply, when they mean "the obedience of faith," is evident from the following passage in the epistle to the Romans, ch. vi. 16, 17: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." When Israel became the peculiar people of God, by his selecting them according to his sovereign good pleasure, and externally separating them to himself, it was that they might be subject to his laws. In like manner, when individuals are selected by God to form a part of his peculiar people under the better economy, according to his foreknowledge, and are spiritually separated and set apart, it is that they may obey its law—that they may be-

[1] Rom. ix. 11, 15. Deut. x. 15. Eph. i. 11. [2] Ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος, not τοῦ Πνεύματος.
[3] See note G. [4] See note H. [5] See note I.

lieve the Gospel, and give up their whole inner and outer man to be regulated by its influence—it is that, taught by "the grace of God, which brings salvation," they may "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."[1]

Still farther, they are "elect—to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." When Israel were chosen to be God's people, and externally set apart for this purpose, it was not only that they might be subject to his law, but that they might share in the effects of that law's expiatory offerings—that, being sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices by which that covenant was ratified, their ceremonial guilt might be pardoned, their ceremonial pollution removed, and that they might be fitted for external fellowship with Jehovah as their God and King. When God, in accordance with his sovereign purpose of mercy, selects individuals, and sets them spiritually apart for his people, it is that, through the faith of the Gospel, they may be personally interested in the blessings procured by the death of Jesus Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men—that their sins may be forgiven them, that the jealousies of guilt may be removed, that they may be enabled and disposed with a true heart to approach to God, as rich in mercy, ready to forgive, "God in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" and in spiritual fellowship with him, with minds conformed to his mind, and wills conformed to his will, serve him with their souls and bodies, which are his, not only because they are made by him, but because they have been "redeemed" to him, "not by corruptible things as silver and gold, but by precious blood, the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."[2]

Such is the apostle's description of the spiritual state, character, and circumstances of those whom he addresses. They are selected by God according to his own sovereign purpose, and spiritually set apart for him, that believing the Gospel, they may enjoy all the blissful results of the death of Jesus Christ the just one, in the room of the unjust.[3]

III.—THE SALUTATION OF THE EPISTLE.

The benevolent wish or solemn prayer which the apostle presents for those to whom he writes, now calls for our consideration: "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

"Grace" is free favor—sovereign kindness—the principle in the divine mind from which all blessings to sinful men flow. The word is often used as a general name for those blessings which flow from this sovereign kindness. Grace here plainly is the grace of God. The prayer, "Grace be multiplied unto you," implied that they were already objects of the grace of God, and is equivalent to—'God loves you, and has given you proofs of his love. Had he not loved you, would he have selected you—would he have spiritually set you apart

[1] Tit. ii. 11–14. [2] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. [3] See note K.

for himself—would he have brought you to the obedience of the truth —would he have sprinkled you with the blood of Jesus? May you have continued, increasing, and multiplied proofs that God loves you, in the continuance, and increase, and multiplication of all heavenly and spiritual blessings!'

"Peace" is not so much a different thing from "grace," as a different view of the same thing. We call spiritual blessings "grace," as springing from God's sovereign kindness. We call them "peace," as calculated to tranquillize our minds and make us happy. The prayer, "Peace be multiplied to you," is equivalent to—'You already enjoy peace and happiness.' For "they who believe, do enter into rest." 'May your happiness be continued—may it increase!' May "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!"

Having thus, very cursorily, considered the interesting topics suggested by this passage of Scripture, let us, my brethren, endeavor to turn them to practical account. A great majority of us are professors of Christianity. Does the description given in the text suit us? Have we any satisfactory evidence that we have been selected by God—called by his grace—spiritually separated to his service—that we have believed the truth, and are enjoying the happy consequence of the belief of the truth, in having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Christ? Do we feel that *here* we are "strangers of the dispersion," and are waiting for "the gathering together," at the period when all the citizens of heaven shall be assembled in the New Jerusalem, where all the children of God shall be brought home to their Father's house? If this is the case with you, brethren, then let your conduct correspond with your privileges; and "may grace and peace be multiplied to you, and to all the Israel of God."

If it be otherwise, we call on you now to obey the truth, and, through the obedience of the truth, to submit your hearts and consciences to the pacifying and purifying influence of the atoning blood of Jesus. We know nothing about the purpose of God in reference to individuals till that purpose is manifested in its execution; but we do know the purpose of God in reference to lost men generally, and we proclaim it as the appointed means of gathering from among men the elect of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not have been justified by the law of Moses."[1]

[1] John iii. 16, 17. Acts xiii. 38, 39.

Note A. p. 29.

The following are the principal references to the Old Testament in the epistle:—Chap. i. 16; Lev. xi. 44. Ch. i. 24, 25; Isa. xl. 6, &c.—Ch. ii. 3; Psal. xxxiv. 9. Ch. ii. 4; Psal. cxviii. 16. Ch. ii. 6; Isa. xxviii. 16. Ch. ii. 7; Psal. cxviii. 22. Ch. ii. 9; Exod. xix. 5, 6; Isa. xliii. 20, 21. Ch. ii. 10; Hos. ii. 23. Ch. ii. 17; Prov. xxiv. 21. Ch. ii. 22; Isa. liii. 4, 6, 7, 9.—Chap. iii. 6; Gen. xviii. 12. Ch. iii. 10–12; Psal. xxxiv. 13, &c. Ch. iii. 14, 15; Isa. viii. 12, &c. Ch. iii. 20; Gen. vi. 3, 12.—Chap. iv. 8; Prov. x. 12; comp. xvii. 9. Ch. iv. 18; Prov. xi. 31.—Chap. v. 5; Prov. v. 34. Ch. v. 7; Psal. lv. 23.

Note B. p. 29.

Of the assertion in the text the reader will be furnished with ample evidence, in comparing the passages here noted:—1 Pet. i. 3. Eph. i. 3. 1 Pet. i. 20. Rom. iv. 24; xvi. 25. Col. i. 26. 1 Pet. ii. 13. Rom. xiii. 1–5. 1 Pet. ii. 16, &c. Gal. v. 13. 1 Pet. ii. 18; iii. 1. Eph. vi. 5. Col. iii. 18. 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4. 1 Tim. ii. 9. 1 Pet. iii. 22. Eph. i. 20, &c. 1 Pet. iv. 10. Rom. xii. 6, &c. 1 Pet. v. 1. Rom. viii. 18. 1 Pet. v. 8. 1 Thess. v. 6. 1 Pet. v. 14. 1 Cor. xvi. 20. Rom. xvi. 16. 1 Thess. v. 26. Wetstein notices a very remarkable character of style which Peter has, in common with Paul. "Ita sermonem suum ordinat ut membrum sequens ex precedentis fine inchoet et cum eo connectat. I. 4.—*εἰς ὑμᾶς.* 5.—*φρουρουμένους—ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ.* 6.—*ἐν ᾧ.* 7.—*Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.* 8.—*ὃν οὐκ εἰδότες.* 9.—*σωτηρίαν ψυχῶν.* 10.—*περὶ ἧς σωτηρίας—προφητεύσαντες.* 11.—*ἐρευνῶντες.* The same peculiarity strongly marks the first paragraphs of Rom. v. and Eph. i., and also the proem of the Gospel of John.

Note C. p. 29.

The following similarities between Peter and James are remarkable:—1 Pet. i. 6, 7; James i. 2, 3. 1 Pet. i. 24; James i. 10, 11. 1 Pet. i. 3, 23; James i. 18. 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2; James i. 21. 1 Pet. iv. 8; James v. 20. "Videtur omnino vel Jacobo Petri prior vel Petro Jacobi Epistola ob oculos versata fuisse; maxime si utraque Epistola ad easdem ecclesias pertinuerit."—Storr, *Opuscula*, ii. 52.

Note D. p. 34.

Matt. iv. 18, 19. Luke v. 3–11. John i. 40–42. Mark v. 37. Matt. xvi. 16–23; xiv. 28–31; xvii. 1–4, 24–27; xiii. 3, 4. Luke xxii. 8. John xiii. 6. Matt. xxvi. 36, 37. John xviii. 10, 11. Matt. xxvi. 31–35, 69–75. John xx. 2–7. Mark xvi. 7. John xxi. Acts i.; xii. 17; xv. 6–11, 14. Gal. i. 18; ii. 7–9, 11–14. *Vide* Neander's Planting and Training of the Christian Church—Vol. ii. p. 23–41.

Note E. p. 37.

"There is an election to sanctification, as performed by the power of the Gospel, separating the fore-ordained from the mass of forlorn men unto holiness of life. This is nothing else than effectual vocation."—Byfield. "Hic non proprie æterna electio significatur, sed electio in tempore e communi turba hominum ac imprimis Judæorum, quæ electio in Scriptura, alio modo, etiam vocatio, sive vocatio secundum Dei propositum appellatur."—Belg Annot. "Ἐκλεκτοί; vocati secundum electionem."—Schotanus.

Note F. p. 37.

I think it right to mention that Œcumenius and a number both of ancient and modern interpreters, have connected *κατὰ πρόγνωσιν κ. τ. λ.* with *Ἀπόστολος*, and not with *ἐκλεκτοῖς*, referring to Rom. i. 1, and especially to Acts xv. 7. This exegesis is so unnatural as not to require to be refuted. "*Πρόγνωσις* hic non præscientiam, sed antecedens decretum significat ut et Act. ii. 23: idem sensus qui Eph. i. 4."—Grotius. There is no exegetical ground for explaining *προγιγνώσκειν*, and its derivatives of "love," as has often been done to serve a purpose.

Note G. p. 38.

Ἁγιασμὸς segregatio illa sive credentium consecratio, separatio a reliquis hominibus extra Christum perituris.—Beza. "Il vous a séparés effectivement d'avec eux, non pas en vous sanctifiant comme il fit le peuple d'Israël au désert, d'une sanctification externe et corporelle seulement, lorsqu'il le fit arroser du sang de la victime, qui ratifia par sa mort l'alliance de la loy; mais en vous consacrant d'une sanctification intérieure et spirit-

uelle lorsque par la vertu de sa vocation il vous a amenés à l'obéissance de son Evangile et à recevoir l'aspersion du sang de Jesus Christ épandu pour l'establissement de l'alliance de grâce en rémission des pêchés."—AMYRAUT. SEMLER, usually no safe guide, seems right here; he considers the phrase as equivalent to ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνευματικῷ.

NOTE H. p. 38.

In the Επιστολη προς Διογνητον, incorrectly attributed to Justin Martyr—written probably in the earlier part of the second century—the nature of the separation of Christians from mankind generally is thus described:—"The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language, or by customs. They dwell nowhere in cities by themselves; they do not use a different language, nor affect a singular mode of life. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks and of the barbarians, each as his lot has been cast; and, while they conform to the usages of the country in respect to dress, food, and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet show a peculiarity of conduct wonderful and striking to all. They dwell in their own country but as sojourners; they abide on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. In a word, they are in the world what the soul is in the body. The soul is diffused through all the members of the body, and Christians through the cities of the world. But the soul, though dwelling in the body, is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world."

NOTE I. p. 38.

It would be difficult to find an instance in which attachment to an artificial system of Christian doctrine has been carried farther into the interpretation of Scripture, than the explaining, as NISBET does, "election into obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," of election to a participation in the active and passive righteousness of Christ,—obedience standing for the first, and blood for the second. In this instance of παρερμηνεία, our worthy countryman is not original. SCHOTANUS had given the same sense before him. His note is "Ea est obedientia de qua Apostolus, Rom. v. 19."

NOTE K. p. 39.

The exposition given of this passage is that which the principles of a strict exegesis seem to require; and it is free from many difficulties which attend interpreting the passage according to our received translation. "Elect," in the sense of eternally chosen, "according to the foreknowledge of God," is language which seems to suit a conditional better than a sovereign choice. "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit," presents a very strange arrangement of ideas. Is "the foreknowledge of God," or "election" according to that foreknowledge, *through* sanctification of the Spirit? Surely "sanctification of the Spirit," meaning by that, sanctification by the Spirit, is the result of the divine decree,—the object of the divine foreknowledge,—the cause or means of neither. Then, what is to be made of "obedience," as placed before "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus?" Is not all obedience, which deserves the name, the consequence of being justified through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and being sanctified by the Spirit? and does the Spirit sanctify any who are not sprinkled with the blood of Jesus? All these difficulties, which I confess I cannot solve, are got rid of in the exegesis proposed. "Selected according to the divine foreknowledge," which is just equivalent to the divine purpose (Acts ii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 20), "by a spiritual separation unto obedience," that they "might obey the truth," *i. e.* believe the Gospel—"and," through that "obedience" to the truth, "be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus,"—enjoy all the saving results of the death of Christ—in pardon, sanctification, and eternal life. In the only other passage (2 Thess. ii. 13) where the phrase ἁγιασμὸς πνεύματος occurs, it must be interpreted in the same way. The "choice" there seems plainly selection: by *a. π.* spiritual separation and "belief of the truth."

DISCOURSE II.

THE CHRISTIAN SALVATION DESCRIBED AND ACKNOWLEDGED.

1 Pet. i. 3–5.—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

It has been finely remarked by a pious writer, that "it is a cold and lifeless thing to speak of spiritual things on mere report: but when men can speak of them as their own—as having share and interest in them, and some experience of their sweetness—their discourse of them is enlivened with firm belief and ardent affection: they cannot mention them, but straight their hearts are taken with such gladness as they are forced to vent in praises." [1]

Thus the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesian Church, when about to unfold the numerous, and varied, and invaluable benefits of the Christian salvation, instead of commencing with a mere formal statement of them, bursts forth into a hymn of thanksgiving, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also *trusted* (or rather *have obtained an inheritance*), after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." [2]

[1] Leighton.

[2] Eph. i. 3–14.

And in the epistle before us, the apostle Peter, whose object plainly is to confirm the converts to whom he wrote in the faith and practice and profession of Christianity, notwithstanding all the difficulties and trials to which they were exposed, in bringing forward the vast magnitude and the absolute security of the happiness which the Gospel reveals and secures as one of the most powerful motives to perseverance, presents it in the impressive and animating form of devout ascription of praise to a redeeming God, in the name of himself and his believing brethren: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

In illustrating this very interesting passage of Scripture, our attention must be directed,—I. To the blessings acknowledged; and, II. To the acknowledgment of these blessings.

The blessings acknowledged are these: (1.) the privilege of being the children of God—"God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath begotten us again;" (2.) an inheritance corresponding with this privilege—the "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," which is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven," and for which Christians are "kept by the power of God through faith;" and (3.) a present well-grounded and joyful hope of this inheritance.

The acknowledgment of these blessings naturally turns our attention (1.) to the author of these blessings—God; (2.) to the character in which he bestows them—"the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" (3.) to the principle from which they flow—"his abundant mercy;" (4.) to their vast magnitude and incalculable value; and (5.) to the proper method of Christians expressing their sense of their magnitude and value, by blessing their Divine Author. Such is the outline which I shall endeavor to fill up in the remaining part of this discourse.

I. OF THE BLESSINGS ACKNOWLEDGED.

Let us then, according to this plan, consider, in the first place, the blessings which the apostle here so gratefully acknowledges.

§ 1.—*Divine Sonship.*

The first of these is the privilege of being children of God, "God, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath begotten us again." When it is said, God hath "begotten us," the meaning is, "God hath made us his children;" and when it is said that God hath "again," anew, a second time, "begotten us," the meaning is, 'we were his children in one sense before, but in another, a higher, a better sense, a sense in which we were not his children, he has now made us his children.'

As his rational creatures, the objects of his kind providential care, all men are the children of God. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" He is "the Father of the spirits of all flesh." "We are all his offspring." [1] But, as Christians, we have become the children of God in a sense in which all men are not his children. The appellation, children of God, as applied to true Christians in a mystical, spiritual sense, like most of their peculiar appellations, is borrowed from one of the titles bestowed on the peculiar people of God under the former economy: "Israel," said Jehovah, "is my son, my first-born." "Ye are the children of the Lord your God," says Moses. Jehovah is spoken of as "the Rock that begat them." [2]

When Christians are represented as the children of God, there are two ideas suggested by the appellation. They are brought by him into the relation of children—and they are formed by him to the character of children.

The relation in which every human being stands to God in the present state, previously to his being personally connected with Jesus Christ as the Saviour, is that in which a violator of the law, convicted and condemned, stands to his sovereign. He is the appropriate object of Divine displeasure; in the language of Scripture, "The wrath of God abideth on him." [3] His ultimate happiness, if he remains in this state, is incompatible with the honor of God, the good order of his moral administration, and the well-being of his rational and accountable subjects.

But in the case of genuine Christians, a change of state takes place. The obedience to the death of God's incarnate Son, makes the salvation of sinners consistent with, conducive to, the illustration of the perfections of the Divine character, and subservient to the interests of the Divine government. Faith in Christ is that which, according to the Divine constitution, interests the individual sinner in the "obedience to death" of God's Son. On believing the truth, then, the individual who was condemned is no longer condemned—he is forgiven; he who was a sentenced criminal, is now a beloved child. The relation in which he now stands to God, is that of a son to a father. God no longer frowns on him—he smiles on him. He no longer curses him—he blesses him. He was "angry with him, but he now comforts him." [4]

When God makes men his children, he not only brings them into the relation of children, but he forms them to the character of children. When he gives men the privilege of being his children, he "sends forth into their hearts the Spirit of his Son," who forms in them an habitual temper and disposition, which may be termed "the spirit of adoption." [5] Our sentiments in reference to God, while in our natural condition, are not child-like. Our state is that of condemned criminals, and our character corresponds with our state. The leading feelings of the unrenewed man towards God, are dislike, and jealousy, and fear—"the fear that hath torment." But when God makes us his children, he forms us to the affectionate, confiding

[1] Mal. ii. 10. Acts xvii. 26–28. [2] Exod. iv. 22. Deut. xiv. 1; xxxii. 18.
[3] John iii. 36. [4] Isa. xii. 1. [5] Gal. iv. 4–7. Rom. viii. 15.

character of children. While he leads us to "sanctify him in our hearts," and to fear him without being afraid of him, he disposes us to love him as infinitely amiable and infinitely kind; and to trust in him, as perfectly knowing what is good for us—perfectly able to secure our welfare—perfectly disposed to make us happy.

To be thus brought into the state and formed to the character of God's children, form the two great elements of true happiness, as they form the two grand fundamental blessings of the Christian salvation. They are most intimately connected together. The being brought into the state of children is absolutely necessary to the being formed to the character of children. It is impossible to form a slave to the character of a freeman, without making him free. And the formation of us to the character of children, is the great design of God in bringing us into the state of children. He regards and treats us as his children, that we may regard him and treat him as our Father.

We become the children of God—both in reference to state and character, to condition and disposition—through the belief of the truth; and this belief of the truth is produced and maintained by the influence of the Holy Spirit. We are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." We are "begotten" or "born" again, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." It is through the faith of the truth that the condemned sinner is forgiven and justified: "He that believeth is not condemned, and can never come into condemnation;" while on him that believeth not, "the wrath of God abideth." And it is through the faith of the truth that the unholy sinner is sanctified. The heart is "purified by the faith." It is through the knowledge and belief of the truth, with regard to God's character as a Father, that we are formed to the disposition and feelings of children. And this faith of the truth is the result of the influence of the Divine Spirit; so that, when born again—born from above—we are "born of the Spirit."[1] So much for the illustration of this first blessing, for which the apostle presents his acknowledgments.

§ 2.—*The inheritance provided for them.*

The second blessing is the future inheritance which God has provided for us as his children. He has "begotten us again to an inheritance,"—that is, that we may obtain an inheritance, &c. "If children," says the apostle, "then heirs,"[2]—that is, 'if he bring us into the relation and form us to the character of children, he will give us the treatment of children.'

When God made ancient Israel his children—brought them into a covenant relation with him—he assigned to them an inheritance. That inheritance was, like the economy to which it belonged, material and temporal. It was the large and fertile land of Canaan, which they were to possess in security and peace, but into which they were to enter not immediately—not till after a long course of wandering in the wilderness.

[1] Gal. iii. 26. 1 Pet. i. 23. John iii. 18. Acts xv. 9. Τῇ πίστει. [2] Rom. viii. 17.

When God brings men into the relation of children under the new and spiritual and eternal economy, he assigns to them an inheritance which corresponds with the character of that new dispensation—an inheritance of which they are not to obtain the full possession, till "the end come—the consummation of all things." The inheritance here is obviously the celestial blessedness, properly so called—the final state of good men—that state which, commencing with the general resurrection, is to be continued unchanged, except by indefinite progress, forever and ever. What is figuratively termed "the inheritance," v. 4, is literally described, v. 5, "as the salvation ready or prepared to be revealed in the last time."

Of that state we can form but very inadequate conceptions, for it has not yet been "revealed." It does not yet appear what we shall be;[1] it will be fully unveiled by-and-by, but not till "the last time"—the period of "the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." But we may form correct conceptions, so far as they go; and it is of the greatest importance that we should do so. It is a state of complete freedom from evil, both moral and physical, in all its forms, and in all its degrees; and it is a state of perfect holy happiness, suited to a spiritual nature, endowed with intellect and affection and active power, united to a material frame, every way suited to minister to its progressive improvement and enjoyment; a state in which every capacity of blessedness shall be filled to overflowing, and in which the growing capacity shall never outrun the increasing blessedness.

Knowledge and holiness are the two great elements of the celestial happiness. The holy spirits of the just made perfect, clothed upon with their house from heaven—the immortal, incorruptible, powerful, glorious resurrection body, shall be perfectly conformed to God, so far as their limited capacities admit, in knowledge and purity and happiness. God's mind shall be their mind—God's will, their will—God's happiness, their happiness. They shall "know Him as he is—and they shall be like him."[2] This is, I am persuaded, the justest view we can take of the celestial happiness. This is "the inheritance."

The celestial blessedness receives here, and in many other passages of Scripture, the appellation of "the inheritance," for two reasons—to mark its gratuitous nature, and to mark its secure tenure.

An inheritance is something that is not obtained by the individual's own exertions, but by the free gift or bequest of another. The earthly inheritance of the external people of God, was not given them because they were greater or better than the other nations of the earth. It was "because the Lord had a delight in them to love them." "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own right hand save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, for thou hadst a favor unto them."[3] And the heavenly inheritance of the spiritual people of God is entirely the gift of sovereign kindness. "By grace are we saved;" "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."[4]

[1] 1 John iii. 3. [2] Ibid. iii. 2. [3] Psal. xliv. 3. [4] Eph. ii. 5. Rom. vi. 23.

A second idea suggested by the figurative expression, "the inheritance," when used in reference to the celestial blessedness, is the security of the tenure by which it is held. No right is more indefeasible than the right of inheritance. If the right of the giver or bequeather be good, all is secure. The heavenly happiness, whether viewed as the gift of the Divine Father, or the bequest of the Divine Son, is "sure to all the seed." If the title of the claimant be but as valid as the right of the original proprietor, their tenure must be as secure as the throne of God and his Son.

The idea of the security of this happiness is brought forward, however, more distinctly in the description of the inheritance which immediately follows. It is described as "incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading—reserved in heaven" for Christians, while they "are kept by the power of God through faith."

In this description of the inheritance, there are two things which require consideration—the excellence of the inheritance itself; and the security that the Christian shall in due time enjoy it.

The excellence of the inheritance itself, consists in being "incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading."[1] These epithets may seem in a great degree synonymous, and there is no doubt that permanent, unchanging excellence is the leading idea in them all; yet, on looking a little more closely at them, we shall find that each of them presents that general idea in an instructive and pleasing peculiarity of aspect.

The celestial happiness viewed as an inheritance, is "incorruptible." There is nothing in its own nature which can lead to its dissolution. It is not material, but spiritual. It is not composed of "such corruptible things as silver and gold," but of knowledge and of holiness. It is not "meat and drink,"—it is not costly and splendid apparel—it is not stately buildings, nor extensive estates. It is "joy and peace" and happiness arising from sources which, from their very nature, are inexhaustible,—possession of the Divine favor —conformity to the Divine image—intercourse and fellowship with God.

It is not only incorruptible, and therefore everlasting, but it is "undefiled." It is debased by no extrinsic, heterogeneous ingredient. In all our enjoyments on earth, however pure and exalted in themselves, there is a mixture. There is always something wanting —something wrong; and sin, that vilest of all things, taints and pollutes them all. But into heaven there enters "nothing that defileth." There is knowledge, without any mixture of error—holiness, without any mixture of sin—love, without any mixture of malignity; the highest dignities excite there no pride—the richest possessions, no covetousness. The inheritance is undefiled.

Still farther the heavenly inheritance is "unfading!" It "fadeth not away."[2] The garland worn by the blessed is of amaranth—it never withers. The idea here seems to be, It not only is everlasting

[1] Ἄφθαρτος æternum durens. Ἀμίαντος purum—cui nihil mali, nihil vitii est admixtum—ut purum gaudium—gaudium cui nihil tristitiæ admiscetur. Ἀμάραντος non marcescens. —Morus.

[2] ἀμάραντον.

in its own nature, but it will never cease to give happiness to the possessor. How often do worldly possessions wither,—cease to give the happiness they once gave to those who continue to hold rather than to enjoy them! It has been beautifully remarked, that "the sweetest earthly music, if heard but for one day, would weary those who are most delighted with it. But the song of Heaven, though forever the same, will be forever new." [1] Here we are often sated but never satisfied—there, there is constant satisfaction, but there never will be satiety. Such is the excellence of the celestial inheritance.

'But,' may the Christian say, 'the inheritance is indeed inestimably precious; but will it ever be mine?' It is as secure as it is precious, says the apostle. It is "reserved in heaven for you," and you are "kept for it by the power of God through faith."

This inheritance is "reserved in heaven" for Christians—that is, it is secured beyond the reach of violence or fraud. Many a person, born to a rich inheritance, has never obtained possession of it, but has lived and died in poverty; but this inheritance is liable to none of the accidents of earth and time. It is "in heaven," under the immediate guardianship of DIVINE power, wisdom, and love.

'But the inheritance may itself be secure, but not secure for me. There may be perfect happiness in heaven, but I may never reach it there.' To meet this suggestion the apostle adds, "Ye are kept by the mighty power of God through faith." [2] The apostle's doctrine is, and it is quite accordant with the doctrine of his Master and the other apostles, that all who are begotten again by God shall be preserved to the enjoyment of the inheritance. None of them shall fall in the wilderness. "I give unto my sheep eternal life," says Jesus Christ; "and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of my Father's hand." [3] "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." [4]

They are "kept"—preserved safe—amid the many dangers to which they are exposed, "by the power of God." The expression, "power of God," may here refer to the divine power both as exercised in reference to the enemies of the Christian, controlling their malignant purposes, and as exercised in the form of spiritual influence on the mind of the Christian himself, keeping him in the faith of the truth, "in the love of God, and in the patient waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ." It is probably to the last that the apostle principally alludes, for he adds "by faith." It is through the persevering faith of the truth that the Christian is by divine influence preserved from

[1] Leighton.

[2] Hereditas *servata* est: heredes *custodiuntur*. Neque illa his, neque hi deerunt illi.—BENGEL.

[3] John x. 28. [4] Rom. viii. 35–39.

falling, and kept in possession both of that state and character which are absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance.[1]

The perseverance thus secured to the true Christian is perseverance in faith and holiness, and nothing can be more grossly absurd than for a person living in unbelief and sin, to suppose that he can be in the way of obtaining celestial blessedness.

So much for the illustration of the second blessing for which the apostle gives thanks—the future inheritance which God has provided for his children.

§ 3.—*The living hope of the inheritance.*

Let us now proceed to consider the third of these blessings: The living or lively hope of the inheritance, through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead. God hath "begotten us again to a lively hope"—that is, in making us his children, he has excited in us an influential and enduring hope of final and complete happiness.

Mankind in their natural state are said to "have no hope"[2]—that is, they are without any well-grounded rational hope of final happiness. This is true of all men without exception, of the elect of God as well as of others. They have broken the divine law; they have incurred the divine displeasure. They are guilty, and depraved, and miserable. They deserve everlasting destruction; if mercy interpose not, they must meet with their desert.

It is then an inquiry of very deep moment, how is the well-grounded hope of final happiness excited and maintained in the human mind? Now there are two questions which must be resolved, in order to our distinctly apprehending the truth on this subject; the first, what is the ground of the hope referred to in our text? and the second, how is an individual brought to cherish the hope of final happiness on this ground?

With reference to the former of these questions, it is obvious that the ground of hope is not anything in the sinner himself. It is not that he is innocent; it is not that he is less guilty than others. It is not that a great change has been produced, or is to be produced, on him. When he looks at himself in the light of the divine law, a sinner may well perceive abundant reason for fear, abundant reason for despair; but he can never perceive any sufficient reason for hope.

The ground of hope is not in us, but in God. The ground of the sinner's hope—(and the ground of the saint's hope is just the ground of the sinner's hope; for what is a saint but a saved sinner?)—is sometimes represented as the sovereign benignity of God; sometimes as the obedience to death, the finished work, the perfect atonement, of Christ; and sometimes as the free untrammelled revelation of mercy in the word of the truth of the gospel. These are all but different as-

[1] When ἐν and διὰ are connected in one sentence, διὰ refers to external means, whilst ἐν relates to that which is effected in or on a person, as if adhering to him. Eph. i. 7,—ἐν ᾧ (χρ) ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ. Even when impersonal things are spoken of, the distinction between ἐν (of an internal psychological state or power), and διὰ, of means, is apparent: as 1 Pet. i. 5.—τοὺς ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ φρουρουμένους διὰ πίστεως; and v. 22,—ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας, διὰ πνεύματος.—WINER, Part iii. sec. 52, p. 312.

[2] Eph. ii. 12.

pects of the same thing, and the truth on this subject may be thus stated: The ground—the sole ground—of a sinner's hope is the sovereign mercy of God, manifested in consistency with, in glorious illustration of, his righteousness, in the obedience to death of his Son Jesus Christ, the just one in the room of the unjust, of which we have a plain and well-accredited account "in the word of the truth of the gospel." The ground of hope is exhibited in such passages of Scripture as the following:—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." [1]

The second question is, how is the sinner brought to cherish the hope of eternal life on this ground? Now, if the preceding remarks have been understood, there can be no difficulty in answering this question. The free sovereign mercy of God, manifested in a consistency with his righteousness, is revealed in the gospel; and it can only be by that gospel being understood and believed, that the individual sinner can obtain the hope of eternal life. If I believe this revelation, I hope for eternal life, and I hope for eternal life on this ground. If I do not believe this revelation, I either have no hope of eternal life, or, if I have, it is a hope built on another and a false foundation. It is in the faith of the truth that the sinner finds hope. Not that the sinner's faith is the ground of his hope, but that it is through believing alone that he can discover the ground on which his hope must rest. When Elisha's servant was overwhelmed with fears lest his master should fall into the hands of the Syrians, these fears were turned into assured hope, when, with enlightened eyes, he beheld the heavenly host with which they were surrounded. His hope rested, not on his seeing that host, but on their being there; but still his seeing them there was in the nature of things necessary to his hope.[2] In like manner the sinner's hope rests entirely on God's free sovereign kindness, manifested in harmony with his righteousness; but it is only in the belief of the truth that this sovereign kindness can be apprehended as a ground of hope.

The ground of hope never varies. The ground of the hope of eternal life to an aged and accomplished saint, just about to enter

[1] John iii. 16. Rom. iii. 21–25. 1 Tim. i. 15. 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. Heb. vii. 25.
[2] 2 Kings vi. 15–17.

Paradise, is the very same as to the most guilty and depraved of men who has just been brought to the knowledge and faith of the truth. "The beginning of our confidence" is the end of our confidence. Our first hope is our last hope.

It follows of course that the great means of maintaining and strengthening hope, is just the continued and the increasing faith of the truth. At the same time it is plain from Scripture, that as the faith of the truth uniformly produces holiness as well as hope, unholy tempers are in their own nature calculated to cloud our hope; and holy tempers and conduct to strengthen it, not by adding to its foundation, but by affording evidence that we have built on that foundation.

There are two other questions respecting this hope, which, though not of such vital importance as those which I have now endeavored briefly and plainly to answer, are yet of very considerable interest at all times, and particularly at present, when much darkening of counsel by words without knowledge, on this subject, seems to me to prevail.[1] Is the hope of eternal life connected with the faith of the gospel? And does every believer enjoy an unclouded hope of eternal life?

With regard to the first question, I unhesitatingly reply in the affirmative. The gospel cannot be believed without, in the degree in which it is believed, producing the hope of eternal life. It is not only not necessary that a sinner should wait till the faith of the gospel has proved its efficacy in a moral transformation of his nature, before he begin to cherish the hope of salvation, but he cannot believe the gospel without cherishing that hope; and it is through means of this hope that the gospel believed, in a great measure, works that moral change. To believe the gospel, and to despair of salvation, are two utterly incompatible states of mind. We hold, then, that every believer, according to the measure of his faith, has the hope of eternal life.

And in this principle we also find the true answer to the second question; 'Does every believer enjoy the unclouded hope of eternal life?' He does enjoy that hope according to the measure of his faith. If he is strong in faith, he abounds in hope. But as every believer in the present state has but an imperfect apprehension both of the truth and of its evidence, and is still to a certain extent under the influence of false views, every believer, while in the present state, is imperfect both in holiness and in hope. At the same time, his imperfection in both is not more his misfortune than his fault. A perfect faith of a completely understood gospel would produce unshaken, unclouded hope, and enable the Christian at all times, in all circumstances, to "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

This hope of eternal life, grounded on the sovereign mercy of God manifested, in harmony with his holiness and righteousness, through the mediation of Christ, revealed in the gospel; and excited, maintained and strengthened by the faith of the gospel, is described here as "a lively," or rather "a living hope."[2] The hope of the Christian

[1] The reference here is to the speculations about Universal Pardon, which, at the time this discourse was delivered, December 1830, were very prevalent in this country.

[2] ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν

is a "living" hope, in opposition both to a dead and a dying hope—in opposition to the dead hope of the hypocrite, and the dying hope of the self-deceiver.

The apostle James speaks of "a dead faith," which, on examination, turns out to be no faith at all, but merely a man's saying he has faith.[1] There is also a dead hope, which is in reality no hope at all, but merely a profession of it. A mere professed hope, founded on a mere professed faith, is a dead thing—it can make a man neither holy nor happy—it cannot animate to duty—it cannot support under suffering. But the hope of the Christian is "a living hope." It fills him with joy and peace in the degree in which it prevails; and it leads him to purify himself, even as he in whom he places his confidence is pure. The hope of eternal life is the well-grounded expectation of perfect holy happiness. Now is it not perfectly plain, so plain as to need no illustration, that this must be a living operative hope, and that, just in the degree in which it exists, it must make him in whom it dwells both holy and happy? It will induce a man to submit to the greatest evils rather than renounce the faith of Christ; and it will keep him cheerful and happy amidst all the sacrifices which he may be called on to make in the cause of his Saviour.

This hope is termed "a *living* hope," not only in opposition to a *dead* hope, but also in opposition to *dying* hopes. There are many hopes which are not merely professed, but really entertained, that will never be realized. This is true both as to worldly hopes and as to religious hopes. With regard to worldly hopes, have we not all from experience discovered the truth of the remark,—"They are not living, but lying, dying hopes. They often die before us, and we live to bury them, and see our own folly and simplicity in trusting to them, and at the utmost they die with us when we die, and can accompany us no farther."[2] With regard to religious hopes, it is a happy thing when all of them, not founded on the faith of the truth, die before we die; for till these dying hopes expire, the living hope cannot exist. All hopes of eternal life, excepting that which we have been endeavoring to describe, will most assuredly expire when we expire, and make those who relied on them ashamed and confounded world without end. But this hope lives in death. This hope remains unshaken by all the calamities which can befal the believer here; for he knows nothing can separate him from the love of God. Death and judgment and eternity do not destroy, they fulfil this hope; and as the object of the hope is ever-enduring holy happiness, it is plain that hope as well as enjoyment must continue forever.

This "hope makes not ashamed," that is, it never disappoints; and, if you would know the reason, you will find the apostle Paul assigning it, from the 5th to the 10th verse of the 5th chapter of the epistle to the Romans: "Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners,

[1] James ii. 17. [2] Leighton.

Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." [1]

This living hope is produced "by" means of "the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead." [2] The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most striking and satisfactory proofs of the divinity of his mission, and, of course, of the truth of all its doctrines; and, among the rest, of that grand characteristic doctrine of his gospel on which the hope of eternal life is founded. It is, indeed, not so much one evidence as "a cloud of witnesses." It is the fulfilment of Old Testament predictions respecting the Messiah, and thus proves him to be the Messiah—it is the fulfilment of his own predictions, and therefore proves him to be a true prophet. It is God determining the controversy between him and his unbelieving countrymen. He declared himself to be the Son of God, and they put him to death because he declared himself to be the Son of God; and God interposed, and by doing for him what none but God could have done, proved that He was right, and they were wrong. Most powerfully was Jesus Christ demonstrated to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.[3]

But there is a more intimate connection than this between the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the hope of eternal life. Christ's resurrection from the dead is a clear proof of the reality and efficacy of his atoning sacrifice. He "who was given for our offences, has been raised again for our justification." [4] When God "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant," he manifested himself to be "the God of peace," the pacified Divinity. He "raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in himself." Had Jesus not risen, "our faith had been vain; we should have been still in our sin," [5] and without hope. But now that he has risen—

> "Our surety freed, declares us free,
> For whose offences He was seized;
> In His release our own we see,
> And joy to view Jehovah pleased."

But even this is not all. Our Lord's resurrection is to be viewed not only in connection with his death, but with the following glory. Raised from the dead, he has received "all power in heaven and on earth, that he may give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him." How this is calculated to encourage hope, may be readily apprehended. "Because he lives, we shall live also." Having the keys of death and the unseen world, he can and will raise us from the dead, and give us eternal life. He sits at the right hand of God. "Our life is hid with him in God; and when he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory." We are

[1] The above remarks, somewhat amplified, have been repeatedly published, under the title of "Hints on Hope."

[2] Δι' ἀναστάσεως. Hoc pendet a ζῶσαν. Col. v. 21.—BENGEL. [3] Rom. i. 4

[4] Rom. iv. 25. [5] Heb. xiii. 20. 1 Pet. i. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 17

not yet in possession of the inheritance; but he, our head and representative, is. "We see not yet all things put under us; but we see Him," the Captain of our salvation, "for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor."[1] The resurrection of Christ, when considered in reference to the death which preceded, and the glory which followed it, is the grand means of producing and strengthening the hope of eternal life.

Let us all beware of false hopes. Let him who never hoped, now receive the truth in the love of it, and begin to hope. Let those who have believed abound in hope. There is, there can be, no danger of hoping too confidently, if the hope be but placed on the right foundation. "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end;[2] that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

II.—OF THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THESE BLESSINGS.

The devout acknowledgment of these blessings comes now to be considered: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." This devout acknowledgment naturally leads the mind to reflect on God as the author of these blessings—on the character in which he bestows them, "the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"—on the principle in which the bestowal of these blessings originates, "abundant mercy"—on their vast magnitude and inestimable value—and on the proper manner of Christians expressing their sense of this magnitude and value.

§ 1.—*God is the author of these blessings.*

The first remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that God is the author of the blessings acknowledged. This is not only implied in making the acknowledgment—for when we return thanks for a favor, to whom do we offer our acknowledgment but to him who has bestowed it?—but it is distinctly expressed: God has begotten us again. God has provided us an inheritance. God has given us a living hope.

God is the author of all good. All the holiness and all the happiness in the universe come from him. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." In the new creation, "All things are of God."[3] The blessings enjoyed by Christians are all the free gifts of his sovereign goodness. He makes us his children. He brings us into the relation of children. He forms us to the character of children. When we are

[1] John xiv. 19. Rev. i. 18. Col. iii. 3. Heb. ii. 9. [2] *Iva.* Heb. vi. 11, 12.
[3] James i. 17. 2 Cor. v. 18.

brought into the relation of children, our sins are forgiven, and we are justified freely by God's grace. But "who can forgive sins, but GOD only?" "It is GOD that justifieth."[1] The sentence of the law can be remitted only by the great Lawgiver. The privilege of being the sons of God can be conferred by none but God. As it is God who brings us into the relation of children, it is God who forms us to the character of children. "For we are HIS workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus." It is God who, by the agency of his own Spirit, through the instrumentality of his own word understood and believed, transforms the character of a condemned felonious slave into that of a beloved and dutiful child. It is HE who takes "the hard and the stony heart out of our flesh, and gives us a heart of flesh." It is HE who disposes us to venerate, and esteem, and love, and trust him. It is HE who enables us cheerfully to obey his commandments, and submit to his appointments. It is HE who sends forth his Spirit into our hearts, teaching us to cry, "Abba, Father."[2]

As it is God who makes us his children, bringing us into the filial relation, forming us to the filial character, so it is God who has provided, and who will bestow on his people, the inheritance corresponding to the relation into which he has brought them, and the character to which He has formed them. "It is the FATHER'S good pleasure to give them the kingdom." The final happiness of the saints is entirely the result of DIVINE love, and wisdom, and power. "Eternal life is the gift of God."[3] God himself is, indeed, if I may use the expression, the very substance of the celestial blessedness. To know him—to see him as he is—to find in him the adequate object of all our unbounded capacities of knowledge, and affection, and enjoyment—to love him, and to be loved by him, and to know that we are loved by him—to be like him, having no mind different from his, no will opposed to his—to enter into his joy, and thus to have our joy made full—this is the inheritance; and who can thus give us God, but God himself?

And all that was necessary, in order to make the communication of such a happiness to such creatures as we are—guilty, righteously condemned—consistent with the honor of the divine character; and all that is necessary to make such depraved creatures as we are, capable of such a happiness, is the work, not of men nor of angels, but of God. His love originated the purpose—his wisdom formed the plan—his power will work out the accomplishment, of his people's salvation.

As the inheritance is his gift, so also is the hope of the inheritance. It is God who gives us the living hope. The ground of that hope is HIS sovereign kindness—that kindness is displayed in harmony with righteousness, in HIS giving HIS Son to be the propitiation for the sins of men. This display of his sovereign kindness is made in HIS revelation of HIS will by "holy men who spoke as they were moved by HIS Spirit;" and this revelation, in the belief of which alone the condemned sinner can find hope, is understood and believed by the individual sinner, in consequence of the effectual working of HIS

[1] Mark ii. 7. Rom. viii. 33.
[2] Eph. ii. 10. Ezek. xi. 19. Gal. iv. 6.
[3] Luke xii. 32. Rom. vi. 23.

Spirit. It was He who "delivered his Son for our offences." It was He who "raised him again for our justification." It is He who disposes us to believe this revelation of mercy. It is He who thus gives us "good hope through grace." Every measure of the living hope, from the faint dawn which opens on the mind of the sinner coming to the knowledge of the truth, to the clear unclouded radiance which enlightens the mind of him who has received "the full assurance of understanding," every measure of this living hope is the gift of God; and we end as we began the illustration of this particular with the sublime declaration of the apostle respecting the new creation, "All things are of God." "Of Him, and through him, and to him, are all things." "God is all in all." [1]

§ 2.—*It is as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God bestows these blessings.*

The second remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that in bestowing the favors here acknowledged, God acts in the character of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God is infinitely holy, and cannot but disapprove sin—cannot but loathe and abhor it in a degree of which we can form no adequate conception. God is inflexibly just, and can "by no means clear the guilty." He is "not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. The foolish shall not stand in his sight; and he hates the workers of iniquity." "Snares, fire and brimstone, and a furious tempest will he rain on the wicked; this pertains to them as a portion of their cup." [2] How is it then, that this holy and righteous God blesses sinful men with all heavenly and spiritual blessings? How is it that he makes *them* his children; gives them a heavenly inheritance, and cheers them with a living hope?

It is as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that he does all this. In the riches of his sovereign mercy he determined to save an innumerable multitude of sinful men, and in the depth of his wisdom he formed a plan for realizing the determination of his mercy, not merely in consistency with, but in glorious illustration of, his holiness and justice. The leading feature in that plan is, the appointment of his only begotten Son to be the representative of those who were to be saved, to be dealt with as they deserved to be dealt with, that they might be dealt with as he deserved to be dealt with. The second person of the glorious Trinity is essentially his Father's equal —possessed of the same divine essence and perfections; but in this assumed character he is the Father's inferior; he acts a subordinate part in the economy of salvation. God, essentially considered, in the person of the Father, is the God of "the Mediator between God and man;" and he is his Father, not merely essentially, as he is the second person of the Trinity, but also economically, as he is the head of the chosen family—"the first-born among many brethren."

The great truth intended to be taught us by God being represented as the author of spiritual blessings to men, in the character of the

[1] Rom. iv. 25. 2 Thess. ii. 16. 2 Cor. v. 18. Rom. xi. 36. 1 Cor. xv. 28.
[2] Exod. xxxiv. 7. Psal. v. 4, 5; xi. 6.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is this—that it is only as viewed in connection with him; or, as the inspired writers usually express it, as "in him," that we sinners can obtain any saving blessing from God. The order is, "all things are ours, we are Christ's, Christ is God's." He is our God because he is his God, our Father because he is his Father.[1] Take the blessings mentioned in the text as an illustration. God makes us his children, that is, he pardons our sins, he receives us into his favor, he conforms us to his image. Now, how does he do this? He gives "us redemption in Christ, the forgiveness of sins." He makes us "accepted in the beloved." "We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." He gives us an inheritance. How? in Christ. "In him," says the apostle, "we have obtained an inheritance." He makes us to "sit in heavenly places in him."[2] He gives us a living hope. How? While "without Christ," viewed as unconnected with Christ, there is no hope for man; all his well-grounded expectations of happiness must be founded on what Christ has done, and is doing, as the representative of his people. While in the new creation, all things are "of God," all things are "through Christ Jesus." It is as well pleased with Him, that God is well pleased with us; and it is as his God and Father, that he blesses us "with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in him."

§ 3.—*These blessings originate in the "abundant mercy" of God.*

The third remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that in the bestowing of these blessings on us by God, there is a remarkable display of the divine benignity. It is "according to his abundant mercy, that he begets us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; ready to be revealed in the last time." This remark invites us into a very wide field of most interesting and improving illustration; but I must satisfy myself with merely opening to you a few tracks of thought, which you will do well to pursue in private meditation.

Think on the character of him who bestows these blessings,—the absolute, independent Jehovah, perfectly, infinitely, unchangeably happy in himself. How could the self-incurred ruin of guilty mankind affect his interest? It might illustrate his holiness, his righteousness, his faithfulness, but how could it disturb his peace, or lessen his blessedness? It is impossible to conceive the communication of saving blessings to man, to originate in any principle in the divine mind but sovereign benignity. If man is saved, it is "only because God had a delight in him to love him."

Think on the nature of the blessings,—the very highest which can be conferred on creatures, the noblest in their own nature, and in their measure limited by nothing but the capacity of the recipient.

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 22, 23. John xx. 17.

[2] Eph. i. 3–13.

"Behold, what manner of love" is this,[1] to be God's sons, to see him as he is, to be like him, and all this forever and ever!

Think on the character of those on whom they are bestowed,—sinners, guilty, depraved, righteously condemned; deserving everlasting destruction; in the state in which mercy finds them, forgetters, haters, contemners of God. Surely the mercy which confers such blessings on such sinners is abundant mercy, and the apostle may well say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on *us*, that *we* should be called the sons of God."

Think of the number of those on whom these blessings are bestowed,—"the nations of the saved" are a numerous host.[2] The sons who are to be brought to glory are "many sons." They are "a great multitude, an innumerable company, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation;" and all these are blessed up to their largest capacity of enjoyment, during the whole eternity of their being. Is not this abundant mercy?

Once more, think of the means through which the blessings are communicated,—the incarnation, the sacrifice of God's own Son. He did not spare him, he delivered him up for us all, that he with him might freely give us all things. "Herein surely is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."[3]

Surely it is in his "abundant mercy" that "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has blessed us with all heavenly and spiritual blessings."

§ 4.—*These blessings are of vast magnitude and incalculable value.*

The fourth remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that the blessings acknowledged are of vast magnitude and of incalculable value. The plain meaning of the acknowledgment is this: "for conferring these blessings on us, God richly deserves to be thanked and praised uninterruptedly, everlastingly." For every blessing, even for a breath of air, a crust of bread, a draught of water, a moment of ease, we ought to give thanks; for we are unworthy of any favor. Everything in the shape of blessing coming to us from God should excite our gratitude. But the blessings mentioned in the text are obviously peculiarly valuable. They are not "such corruptible things as silver and gold." They include in them deliverance from guilt, depravity, degradation, death, everlasting misery; the enjoyment of the favor of God, tranquillity of conscience, ever-growing conformity to the divine image in holiness and happiness, throughout eternity. Just look at them as here described, and say if they are not unspeakably great, incalculably valuable. What is said of the love in which they originate may be equally applied to them: They have "a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, which pass knowledge."[4]

[1] 1 John iii. 1.
[2] Rev. xxi. 24; vii. 9.
[3] 1 John iv. 10. John iii. 16.
[4] Eph. iii. 18, 19.

§ 5.—*The proper method of acknowledging these benefits is, to "bless" their munificent giver.*

The fifth and last remark suggested by this devout acknowledgment is, that the appropriate manner of expressing our sense of the magnitude and value of these blessings is, to bless their munificent author. When God blesses men, he confers on them blessings, he makes them blessed; when men bless God, they merely declare that he is infinitely excellent and blessed in himself—that he deserves to have his infinite excellencies acknowledged and celebrated—that they recognize this obligation as lying on them—and that they wish to express, by every proper method, their sense of the infinite praiseworthiness of the Divinity.

Nothing surely can be more reasonable than that those who have received such blessings as are here acknowledged, should bless Him who has bestowed them. This is one of the purposes for which they are begotten again. "This people," may Jehovah say of them, "I have formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise." "Ye are a chosen generation," says the apostle, "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."[1] Christians ought to cultivate the feelings of gratitude for the blessings they have received, and which they hope to receive, and often to express their feelings in thanksgiving and praise. Indeed their whole lives should be a hymn of praise to the God of their salvation. The habitual language of their heart should be, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits!" "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never be forgetful of his benefits! who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."[2]

If we really feel gratitude to God for his abundant goodness, we shall express it not merely by our lips, but by our lives. Constrained by "the mercy of God, we shall present our bodies, ourselves, living sacrifices, holy, and acceptable, which is our reasonable service." While we through Christ "offer to him continually the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name;" we will also, "do good and communicate," knowing that "with such sacrifices God is well pleased;" and while we feel ashamed of the coldness of our feelings of gratitude, and the imperfection of our services of acknowledgment, we will look forward with earnest longings to that happy period, when, having been made partakers of the inheritance, we shall, under the influence of the gratitude which "the salvation which is in Christ, with eternal glory," fully possessed, is fitted to exert over a thoroughly sanctified human heart, join in the rapturous anthem of eternity: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever."[3]

[1] Isa. xliii. 21: 1 Pet. ii. 9. [2] Psal. ciii. 1–4: lxxxvi. 12, 13.
[3] Rom. xii. 1. Heb. xiii. 15, 16. Rev. v. 13.

DISCOURSE III.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN CONTRASTED.

1 Pet. i. 6–9.—Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

The first step towards the satisfactory interpretation of a long, complicated, parenthetical sentence like that just now read, is to analyze it. The sentence consists of a direct assertion, with a long parenthesis interposed. The direct assertion is, "In that time, the last time, ye greatly rejoice; ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." The parenthetical statement is, "though *now* for a season, if need be"—or, "since there is need, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom though you have not seen, ye love, not seeing him, but believing in him."

With respect to the direct assertion, a careful reader will easily perceive, that though expressed in the present time, it refers to the future.

The time of the Christian's joy unspeakable and full of glory, is the last time, contrasted with the time of his trial—"now;"[1] when he shall receive the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul—the same period which is described as that of "the appearing" or manifestation "of Jesus Christ." Instances of an assertion made in the present tense, when it plainly refers to the future, are not unfrequent. "Yet a little while I am," that is, shall be, "with you, and then I go," that is, shall go, "unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am," that is, shall be, "thither ye cannot," that is, shall not be able to, "come." "How are," that is, shall be, "the dead raised, and with what bodies do," that is, shall, "they come?" "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth," that is, shall proceed, "out of their mouth, and devoureth," that is, shall devour, "their enemies."[2]

The phrases, "a joy unspeakable and full of glory," are too strong

[1] It is rendered by the future in the Latin Vulgate, and versions made from it.
[2] John vii. 33, 34. 1 Cor. xv. 35. Rev. xi. 5.

to describe the Christian's habitual feelings in the present state; and we find the very same words employed, in reference to the happiness of the final state, in an after part of the epistle. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." [1]

The meaning of the apostle would have been more evident to an English reader, had the assertion been rendered in the future time; "in which time," that is, in the last time, ye shall greatly rejoice—(though now for a season, since it is needful, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, which is more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found to praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom, not seeing him, but believing on him, ye love, though ye have not seen him)—"ye shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul." [2]

The passage, thus interpreted, contains in it a beautiful and instructive comparison, or rather contrast, of the state of Christians in the present and in the last time, on earth and in heaven. The points of comparison or contrast are the following:—I. Now and here, Christ, the great object of their affection, is not bodily present with them, is but imperfectly known by them, and all their knowledge of him, and all their intercourse with him, are by means of faith—Then and there, he will be bodily present with them, intimately known by them, and their knowledge and intercourse will be direct and immediate. II. Now and here, they are exposed to manifold trials—Then and there, they will enjoy the glorious results of these trials. III. Now and here, complete salvation is a subject of faith and hope—Then and there, it shall be the subject of enjoyment. IV. Now and here, they are for a season in heaviness—Then and there, they shall "greatly rejoice;" they shall "rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory." In the remaining part of the discourse I shall endeavor shortly to illustrate this contrasted view of the present and the future state of the true Christian.

I.—CHRIST ABSENT AND BELIEVED ON, CONTRASTED WITH CHRIST PRESENT AND SEEN.

The first point of contrast is, that now and here, Christ, the great object of their affection, is bodily absent from them—is but imperfectly known by them—and all their knowledge of him is by means of faith; then and there, Christ will be revealed—manifested: he will be bodily present with them; he will be intimately known by them, and their knowledge and intercourse will be direct and immediate.

[1] Ch. iv. 13. The parallelism of the two passages is striking:—Ch. i. 6, 8,—ἐν ᾧ (*i. e.* ἐσχάτῳ καιρῷ) ἀγαλλιᾶσθε χαρᾷ ἀνεκλαλήτῳ καὶ δεδοξασμένῃ. Ch. iv. 13,—ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι.

[2] The interpretation we have been led to prefer, is that supported by Œcumenius and Theophylact among the Greek Fathers; by the translators of the Vulgate; by Luther, Vatablus, Clarius, Benson, Pott, and others. Τὸ Ἀγαλλιᾶσθε ἀντὶ μέλλοντος εἴληται.—ŒCUMENIUS.

Christ is the great object of his people's affection; he is, by way of eminence, He whom they love. This is an essential element of the Christian character. When a person is brought under divine influence to understand and believe the Gospel, he perceives that in Christ Jesus centres every amiable excellence in absolute perfection; and that the benefits which he has obtained for us, are infinite in number, value, and duration. He appears at once infinitely lovely and infinitely kind. Contemplating his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth," the believer says in his heart, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." "This is my beloved, and this is my friend." [1] Reflecting on what he has done and what he has suffered; what he has given, and what he has promised—the believer says in his heart, "I love him, because he first loved me." I love him who "loved not his life to the death," for my salvation. I love him who hath "washed me from my sins in his own blood, and made me a king and a priest to God, even his Father." [2] The Christian has other objects of affection besides his Saviour; but He is the object of his supreme affection. In comparison of Him, "he hates even his father and mother." [3]

It is of the essence of love to seek union with its object. We naturally wish to be present with, to become intimately acquainted with, to have frequent intimate intercourse with, the object of our affection. These wishes of the Christian, in reference to the great object of his affection, are—can be, but very imperfectly gratified in the present state. He whom we love was once a man among men. Yes, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men." "Inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same." [4] There was a time when it was possible to have become, in the ordinary sense of the term, familiarly acquainted with Jesus Christ; and I believe very few Christians, not naturally deficient in the imaginative and affectionate parts of our nature, have ever read the history of his going out and in among his chosen followers, without in some measure envying their enjoyments. Who has not occasionally felt a wish rising in his heart that he had come into existence eighteen centuries sooner, and that he had had his lot cast in that land gladdened and dignified above all lands by the presence of the incarnate Divinity—that so he might have contemplated the humble shrine of the divine glory, and seen its radiance bursting through in miracles of power and mercy—that he might have gazed on that countenance which beamed with divine intelligence and benignity, and listened to that voice which poured forth a stream of divine wisdom, and truth, and kindness? Who has not sometimes said in his heart, O happy family of Bethany, all whose members were the objects of Jesus' peculiar love, and under whose hospitable roof he spent so many of his hours! O that, like the three favored disciples, we had been admitted to witness the glory on "the Holy Mount," and to watch and weep with him amid his agony in the garden of Gethsemane! O that we had seen him displaying at once the tokens of his unexampled love, and the proofs of the reality of his resurrection! O

[1] John i. 14. Cant. v. 10, 16.
[2] John iv. 19. Rev. i. 5.
[3] Luke xiv. 26.
[4] John i. 14. Heb. ii. 14.

that we had been with the two disciples when he so opened the Scriptures about himself, as to make their hearts burn within them! O that we had heard the cheering salutation, "Peace be unto you," and felt his warm breath when he said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" Such wishes are natural, I believe, to the renewed mind; and though they belong, it may be, to the weakness of regenerated humanity, I do not think they will be severely judged by Him "who knows our frame, and remembers we are dust."

In the present state, however, these longings cannot be gratified. On the day on which he "led out his disciples as far as to Bethany, and lifted up his hands, and blessed them," "the heavens received him," and they must "retain him till the times of the restitution of all things." [1] And with this arrangement we have good reason to be satisfied, both for his sake and our own. For his sake: for what has earth to offer in the shape of dignity and enjoyment, in comparison of that "name above every name," which he bears in the heaven of heavens, or of those "rivers of pleasures" that are at his Father's right hand? "If we loved him, we would rejoice that he has gone to the Father." For our own: for "it was expedient for us that he should go away; for if he had not gone away, the Comforter would not have come; but having gone, he has sent him to us." Yet still, though we know and believe all this, we feel that our happiness would be increased were we allowed to see his face, and to hear his voice; for we are sure "his voice is sweet, and his countenance is comely." [2]

But not merely is Jesus Christ, the great object of his people's love, bodily absent from them in the present state; while they are here, they can be but very imperfectly acquainted with him. They *are* acquainted with him, and they would not part with their knowledge of him for all the stores of human science. They feel that "it is life eternal to know him;" and they "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." [3] They know, and they are following on to know, him. They are studying his word, and they are studying his providence, which are both manifestations of Him, and they are thus gradually becoming better acquainted with him. But there is much in his word that they but imperfectly comprehend. There is much in his providence which perplexes and confounds them. If it were not their own fault, they might know much more of him than they do; for he is not backward to manifest himself to his people in another way than he does to the world. A more careful study of the Bible, and a more careful study of providential dispensations in the light of the Bible, would be found exhaustless sources of satisfactory information about Him whom we love, affording most amazing displays of his wisdom and power, and faithfulness and kindness. Yet, however carefully these means might be improved, still would it be true that here "we see through a glass darkly; we know but in part," [4] in reference to him whom we love.

While in the present state, our knowledge of him, and our intercourse with him, are through the medium of faith. "We do not see him—we believe in him." His mind and his heart are made known

[1] Luke xxiv. 20, 21. Acts iii. 21.
[2] Phil. ii. 9. Psal. xvi. 11. John xiv. 28; xvi. 7.
[3] John xvii. 3. Phil. iii. 8.
[4] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

to us in his word. It is only so far as we understand this word that we know him; and it is only so far as we believe it that we have intercourse with him; his mind then becoming our mind, and his will our will. It is true that we have "the Spirit whom he hath given us;" [1] but that Holy Spirit does not directly give us information about Christ; he only, by his enlightening influence, enables us to understand and believe the information contained in the Scriptures; and while, if we are Christians, we are "joined to the Lord," [2] and are "one Spirit" with him we love, the intercourse of holy desire and affection is carried on entirely by means of clear and impressive views of revealed truth. Such is the Christian's situation while here below, in reference to the object of his supreme love. He is not bodily present with us—he is but imperfectly known by us; and all our knowledge of him, and intercourse with him, are through the medium of faith.

It will be otherwise by-and-by. In "the last time" there will be "a revelation of Jesus Christ." At the appointed season He will bodily return to earth for the entire salvation of his chosen ones. He will then deliver them completely from "the last enemy" by raising them from the dead; and in his glorified body will forever dwell in the midst of his people, all of them possessed of bodies "fashioned like unto his glorious body." "Ye men of Galilee," said the angels to the disciples who stood gazing up to heaven, after the cloud had received the ascending Saviour out of their sight—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up to heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." "Behold," says John the divine, hurried forward by the inspiring Spirit to "the last time," even "the time of the revelation of Jesus Christ,"—"Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." The man Christ Jesus, ordained to be the judge of the world, shall descend from heaven, and having raised the dead, and pronounced and executed righteous judgment on all the living and the dead, shall return to heaven, and spend the endless years of eternity amid his reanimated and completely redeemed people, a glorified man amid glorified men, their Lord and yet their brother, the visible Head of his visible body, the Church—"the fulness of him who filleth all in all." [3]

That the happiness of the saints will be greatly increased by the bodily presence of their Lord and Saviour and Brother, there can be no doubt. But "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" seems to me to import something more than this—something still more closely connected with the happiness of his people. He will not only be bodily present with them, but he will be much more extensively known by them. A much more complete manifestation will be made of his excellence and kindness, and they will be rendered much more capable of comprehending this manifestation. Every obscurity in his word will then be removed. Every dark dispensation will be explained. "In his light they shall see light clearly." [4] The excellencies of his personal

[1] 1 John iii. 24. [2] 1 Cor. vi. 17.
[3] Acts i. 11. Rev. i. 3. 1 Cor. xv. 26, 42–55. 1 Thess. iii. 15–17. Phil. iii. 20, 21. Eph. i. 23. [4] Psal. xxxvi. 9.

character, the wisdom and benignity of his mediatorial administration, and the nature and transcendent dignity of his mediatorial honors, will all be apprehended to an extent, and with a clearness, of which at present we have no conception. The meaning of the scriptural descriptions of his excellencies will then be distinctly understood by his people; and they will find that he is excellent and amiable "above all that they have thought." The whole of his varied dispensations in the administration of universal government, shall appear a consistent display of infinite wisdom, righteousness, and benignity; and the glories of that higher order of administration which is to characterize the celestial state, shall be as fully displayed to them as the limited faculties of their glorified nature admit.

The only other idea which I wish to bring before your minds just now, in illustration of the point of contrast between the present and the future state of the Christian, is, that whereas now, all our knowledge of, and all our intercourse with Christ, is through the medium of faith, then it will be direct and immediate. How knowledge is then to be communicated to us by him, how our intercourse with him is to be carried on, we cannot distinctly say, we cannot clearly conceive. We know it will be as different from our present mode of obtaining knowledge and maintaining intercourse, as seeing a thing is from merely crediting a report about it. We shall live, not by faith, but by sight. We shall see no longer as "by means of a mirror,[1] but face to face; we shall know no longer in part; we shall know as we are known." Our knowledge will not be infinite, but it will be very extensive and perfectly clear, altogether unmixed with error or doubt. So much for the illustration of the first point of contrast.

II.—THE TRIALS OF CHRISTIANS IN THE PRESENT STATE CONTRASTED WITH THEIR RESULTS IN THE FUTURE STATE.

The second point of contrast between the present and future state of Christians is, that now and here, Christians are exposed to numerous and varied trials; then and there, they shall enjoy the glorious results of these trials. Christians in the present state are exposed to "temptations," to "manifold"—that is, numerous and varied, "temptations." Temptation is ordinarily used to signify enticement to sin; but in the New Testament it frequently signifies afflictions generally, viewed as trials, and this is obviously its meaning in the passage before us. The apostolical assertion then is, Christians are exposed in the present state to numerous and varied afflictions, and these numerous and varied afflictions are trials of the reality and strength of their faith, and hope, and love, and patience, and other graces.

An abstract consideration of the divine character, and of the relation in which true Christians stand to God, would lead us to expect that they should be completely exempted from affliction. He is infinitely powerful, and wise, and good. They are the objects of his peculiar love. Is it not natural, then, to conclude, that from the moment they are brought into the relation of children to him by faith in

[1] Δι' ἐσόπτρου, ἐν αἰνίγματι.—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Christ Jesus, they should be freed from evil in all its forms and degrees, and made happy up to their largest capacity of happiness? But "his ways are not our ways; nor are his thoughts our thoughts. As the heavens are high above the earth; so are his thoughts above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways."[1]

Christians are not exempted from the ordinary evils of life. It is true of them, as of mankind generally, that they are "born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." They are "of few days and full of trouble." Poverty, reproach, sickness, disappointment, sorrow, pain, and death, are the lot of the saint as well as the sinner. Many who are "rich in faith," are "poor in this world," strangers to the comforts and conveniences, and but scantily furnished with even the necessaries of life. They may be, they often are, the subjects of the most painful and loathsome diseases, and the general law of mortality holds in their case equally as in that of their irreligious neighbors,—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Indeed, in very many cases a larger proportion of suffering than ordinary seems to fall to the lot of the children of God. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."[2]

Besides the afflictions which are common to the saint as a man, there are others which are peculiar to him as a Christian. He is exposed to suffering from the world "lying under the wicked one," and he is exposed to suffering from the wicked one himself. "In the world," said our Lord to his followers, "ye shall have tribulation;" and the faithful witness did not lie. All who have lived godly in this world have suffered, "all who will live godly must suffer, persecution." Some of them have "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain by the sword, they wandered about in sheep's skins and goat's skins —destitute, afflicted, tormented, they wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and in caves of the earth."[3] And even where they are not exposed to open violence, they find that "this world is not their friend, nor this world's law;" that the world which hated their Lord and Master does not love them; and that a malignant influence in reference to their best interests is constantly proceeding forth from "the present evil world."

In addition to trials from the world, the Christian is exposed to affliction from the assaults of his unseen enemies. He has to strive, not only "with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places." "His enemy, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."[4] His fiery darts, when not warded off by the shield of faith, sink deep into the heart, and inflict, though not a deadly, yet a most painful wound; and the buffetings of some of his messengers are all but intolerable.

All these afflictions, from whatever quarter they come, are "trials." They are intended to prove and to improve the Christian, to try at once the reality and the vigor of his gracious principles; and not

[1] Isa. lv. 8, 9. [2] Job v. 7; xiv. 1. James ii. 5. Gen. iii. 19. Heb. xii. 6.
[3] John xvi. 33. 2 Tim. iii. 12. Heb. xi. 36–38. [4] Eph. vi. 12. 1 Pet. v. 8.

only to try them, but to strengthen them. This, then, is the state of the Christian; while here, he is exposed to numerous and varied afflictions, by means of which he is tried and improved.

But in the state of final happiness there will be no affliction. The trial, having served its purpose, shall cease, and nothing but the glorious result of the trial will remain. "The trial of the Christian's faith" by means of these manifold afflictions, "is more precious than the trial of gold." The apostle does not here directly contrast faith and gold, but the trial of faith and the trial of gold.[1] Trial by fire improves gold; it frees it from all debasing alloy, but it does not render it indestructible. Refine gold as you will, it is, after all, a perishing thing. But the trial of the faith of the Christian has a nobler result. Purified and strengthened by the trials it is exposed to under the influence of the Holy Spirit, faith, with all the graces which grow out of it, survives the wreck of all material things, and, "at the revelation of Jesus Christ, is found to praise, and honor, and glory." The results of all the trials to which they have been exposed in the present state, will be found in that character of perfect conformity to the image of God, in which consist at once their perfect holiness and their perfect happiness.

"Praise, honor, and glory," are synonymous expressions, and are equivalent to a very strong superlative. The praise, glory, and honor, may be referred either to the saints themselves or to their Lord and Saviour; to the saints themselves, for we know that "praise, and honor, and glory," shall be to every saint "in the day when Jesus Christ shall judge the secrets of all hearts;" to their Lord and Saviour, for we know that "he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."[2] It has been beautifully remarked, "These two will well agree together; that it be both to their praise and to the praise of Christ; for certainly all their praise and glory will end in the praise and glory of their head, Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. They have each their crown, but their honor is to cast them all down before His throne."

III.—THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT STATE A STATE OF EXPECTATION—HIS FUTURE STATE, A STATE OF ENJOYMENT.

The third point of comparison or contrast between the present and future state of Christians is, that now and here complete salvation is the object of faith and hope; then and there it will be the object of enjoyment.

Saints in the present state are made partakers of many of the blessings of the Christian salvation. So far as the purchase of salvation is concerned, immediately on believing the truth they are interested indefeasibly in that all-perfect work of Christ which secures their everlasting happiness. They obtain the forgiveness of all their sins. "In him they have redemption through his blood—the forgiveness of sins." They obtain deliverance from the prevailing power

[1] πολὺ τιμιώτερον χρυσίου—*i. e.* τοῦ δοκιμίου τοῦ χρυσίου.—GROTIUS.
[2] Rom. ii. 10. 2 Thess. i. 10. [3] Leighton.

of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over them." [1] They obtain a joy, and peace, and satisfaction, to which, till they believed, they were strangers. But still they are but very imperfectly possessed of the Christian salvation—complete deliverance from evil in all its forms and all its degrees.

We have seen, that they are still exposed to the ordinary calamities of life, to the persecution of the world, and to the temptations of Satan. They are still but imperfectly delivered from their innate depravity. Sin, though it no longer reigns, yet dwells in them. There is still much darkness in the understanding, much disorder in the affections, much perversity in the will. They are far, very far, from being "holy as God is holy, perfect as he is perfect." This mortal has not yet put on immortality. This corruptible has not yet put on incorruption. In one word, perfect holy happiness—complete salvation, is, in the present state, the object, not of enjoyment, but of faith and hope. "We ourselves," says the apostle, "who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body"—the final deliverance on the day of the resurrection; "for we are saved by hope"—that is, our salvation at present is not in possession, but in expectation: we are not so much saved as we hope to be saved: "For hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" [2]

In the future state, however, Christians shall obtain, in all its extent and perfection, "the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory." They shall receive "the end of their faith, even the salvation of their soul."

The final salvation is termed the salvation of "the soul," not to exclude the salvation of the body; "for we look for the Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change these vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body;" but because the soul in itself, immaterial and immortal, is both the nobler part of human nature, and the immediate seat of that holy happiness in which the Christian salvation essentially consists.[3]

This salvation is said to be "the end of their faith"—that is, I apprehend, the termination of their faith.[4] The attainment of complete salvation shall no more be a matter of faith; it shall be a matter of experience. They will no more believe that they shall be saved; they will know that they are saved. We are persuaded that faith will continue forever in heaven; but the object of faith will then be, not the attainment of a complete salvation, but the eternal continuance of the enjoyment of a complete salvation already attained. In one word—here Christians believe they shall be saved, here they hope to be saved; there they are saved.

[1] Eph. i. 7. Rom. vi. 14.

[2] Rom. viii. 23–25.

[3] Phil. iii. 20, 21. See note A.

[4] Heb. x. 39.—Ὑποστολὴ tends to, ends in Ἀπώλεια. Πίστις tends to, ends in Περιποίησις ψυχῆς—the same thing as σωτηρία ψυχῶν.

IV. —THE SORROWS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT STA TECONTRASTED WITH THE JOYS OF HIS FUTURE STATE.

The fourth point of contrast is, Now, and Here, Christians are "for a season in heaviness" on all these accounts; Then, and There, they will "rejoice, greatly rejoice, rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." The bodily absence of Jesus Christ, their imperfect knowledge of him, their indirect and interrupted intercourse with him, their manifold trials, their imperfect enjoyment of the blessings of the Christian salvation—all these naturally produce, to a certain degree, a depression of spirit. The Christian is "in heaviness." He mourns the absence of his Lord, and says in his heart, "Oh! that I knew where I could find him, that I might come even to his seat." Under the pressure of bodily affliction or mental distress, he is constrained to cry out, "I am oppressed—undertake for me." Harassed with the movements of remaining corruption, he groans out, "Wretched man that I am; who will deliver me?" And feeling that he is saved but in hope, he sighs out, "How long, O Lord, how long?" "When shall I come and appear before God?" [1]

This heaviness of heart is but for a season—it is, at least in an oppressive degree, not constant, but only occasional, and at any rate it is only for the season, the short season, of mortal life. And what should still further prevent Christians from murmuring, is the thought that, if they are in heaviness even for a season for these causes, it is "since there is need for it." [2] All is ordered, and all is well ordered. He does not "afflict willingly, nor grieve without a cause." [3] Everything in the saint's lot is arranged in the way best suited to promote his true, his everlasting welfare.

But in the future state there will be no heaviness, no, not even "for a season." It will no more be needful. Affliction will have served its purpose, and will forever cease. There, then, will be nothing but unmingled happiness and unending rejoicing. "They shall rejoice; they shall rejoice with a joy which is unspeakable," which cannot be adequately expressed, "and full of glory"—that is, either in the highest degree glorious and excellent, or full of gloriation or triumph. It is needless for us to attempt to illustrate this subject; we can do nothing but quote a few passages of Scripture, which, in all their extent of meaning, seem applicable only to this final state of happiness. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs, and with everlasting joy on their head; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw her shining; for the Lord God shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. The Lamb who is in the midst of

[1] Job xxiii. 3. Isa. xxxviii. 14. Rom. vii. 24. Rev. vi. 10. Psal. xlii. 2.
[2] εἰ δέον ἐστί. [3] Lam. ii. 33.

the throne shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." [1]

Thus have I shortly considered the beautiful and instructive contrast contained in the text between the saint's condition on earth and in heaven. And now, in conclusion, ought not all Christians, with the apostle, to "reckon," judge, conclude, on the most satisfactory premises, "that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them"—and that, however heavy and long continued, that "affliction" is but "light," and "for a moment," which "worketh out for them such a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." [2]

Who would not be a Christian? For ah! how different are the prospects of the unbeliever? He, too, must see Christ Jesus, whom he does not love, but it will be as a righteous judge, coming "in flaming fire to take vengeance" on him as an adversary of God. His afflictions here will prove to have been but "the beginning of sorrows;" what he now fears he will then feel, and feel to be far worse than he feared; and, instead of joy unspeakable and full of glory, there will be woe, unutterable but in "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." [3]

Let Christians live like those who have such prospects. Let them "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know their labor is not in vain in the Lord;" and, "having such promises," let "them cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God."

NOTE A. p. 69.

Perhaps there is in the expression σωτηρίαν ψυχῶν, a reference to the scriptural trichotomy of human nature.—1 Thess. v. 23. Heb. iv. 12. Phil. i. 27. Luke i. 47. 1 Cor. xv. 44. Exod. xxxv. 21. Ψυχὴ is that to which moral corruption and consequent misery cleave. In the present state it is but partially subjected to the πνεῦμα, which is "life because of righteousness;" but at the revelation of Jesus Christ, σῶμα, ψυχὴ, and πνεῦμα, shall all equally, according to their nature, enjoy the σωτηρία. Rom. viii. 10, 11. Bengel considers ψυχὴ as used generally of the spiritual part of man. His note is, as usual, brief but significant. "Anima praecipue salvatur: corpus in resurrectione participat." It has been thought by some, that there is here a tacit reference to the Jewish hope of external bodily deliverance, from slavery and oppression, by the Messiah. The Christian's hope is, "the salvation of *the soul*."

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[1] Isa. xxxv. 10. Ibid. lx. 19, 20. Rev. xxi. 3, 4.
[2] Rom. viii. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 17.
[3] 2 Thess. i. 8. Matt. viii. 12.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE FINAL HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS THE SUBJECT OF OLD TESTAMENT PREDICTION, NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION, AND ANGELIC STUDY.

1 Pet. i. 10–12.—Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

If we would satisfactorily understand any book, or any passage in a book, there are two points which we must distinctly apprehend, and never lose sight of. These are, what is the subject of which the author treats, and what is the object which he has in view in treating it. Let us endeavor to ascertain those two points with regard to that paragraph which I have just read, and which I intend to make the subject of the following discourse.

The subject of the apostle is, plainly, the final deliverance and complete happiness which Christians are to obtain at the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is spoken of as "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven;" as "the salvation prepared to be revealed in the last times;" as "the grace which is to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is plainly the subject of the paragraph.

With regard to the object of the apostle in treating this subject, it is obviously to sustain the minds of the Christians to whom he wrote, amid the manifold trials to which they were exposed—to enable them to remain "steadfast and immovable" in the profession of the faith, and in the practice of the duties of their high and holy calling. He states the truth with regard to the immeasurable grandeur, and absolute certainty, of this final salvation, that they might be induced to "gird up the loins of their mind, be sober, and hope to the end," that they might "fashion themselves as obedient children," and "be holy in all manner of conversation, as he who had called them is holy."

No means could be better fitted to gain the end proposed, than that adopted by the apostle; for if they firmly believed that such a salvation certainly awaited every one who "held fast the beginning of his confidence steadfast to the end," [1] it is obvious that the smiles and

[1] Heb. iii. 14.

the frowns, the allurements and the terrors of the world, would be equally powerless to shake their attachment to that Lord who will in due time so munificently reward all his faithful followers.

The manner in which the apostle brings the magnitude and certainty of this salvation before their minds, shows that he, as well as his "beloved brother Paul," speaks "according to the wisdom given to him."[1] He first describes it generally, as "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them, while they are kept to it by the power of God through faith." Then he brings out more prominently its characteristic excellencies, by describing it in contrast with the present state of the people of God. In opposition to a state in which Jesus Christ, the object of the Christian's supreme affection, is bodily absent from him, in which his knowledge of him is limited and obscure, and his intercourse with him carried on entirely through the medium of believing—it is exhibited as a state in which Christ is bodily present with his people, in which their knowledge of him is extensive and distinct, and their communion with him direct and immediate; in opposition to a state in which they are exposed to numerous and varied trials—it is exhibited as a state in which, freed from all trials, they shall enjoy the glorious results of those trials to which in a previous state they had been subjected; in opposition to a state in which complete deliverance and happiness are objects merely of faith and hope—it is exhibited as a state in which they are the objects of enjoyment; and, in fine, in opposition to a state in which they are "for a season, since it is needful, in heaviness"—it is exhibited as a state in which they shall forever "greatly rejoice; rejoice with a joy which is unspeakable, and full of glory."

In the paragraph which forms our text, the apostle takes another and an equally efficient method of bringing before the minds of his readers, the greatness and the certainty of this final salvation, by representing it as one great or leading subject of Old Testament prophecy, apostolic preaching, and angelic study. "Of this salvation the prophets prophesied"—of this salvation "they who preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven made a report"—and "into this salvation the angels desire to look." In the remaining part of this discourse, then, I shall turn your attention to the view which the apostle gives us of the final salvation of Christians, first, as the subject of Old Testament prophecy; secondly, as the subject of apostolical preaching; and, thirdly, as the subject of angelic study.

I.—THE FINAL HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS THE SUBJECT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY.

Let us first, then, attend to the statement which the apostle makes as to this final salvation being the subject of Old Testament prophecy.

"Of," or concerning, "this salvation the prophets[2] inquired and

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 15.

[2] Articulus hic prætermissus grandem, ut sæpe etiam apud Germanos, facit orationem. —BENGEL.

searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us, they did minister."

The truths taught us in these words are the following:—The ancient prophets, inspired by the Spirit of Christ, predicted that final salvation which remains for the people of God; they diligently inquired into the meaning of their own predictions; and they obtained information that these predictions referred to blessings not to be conferred during the economy under which they were placed, but during that higher one which was to supersede it. The first of these truths is taught us in these words, "The prophets prophesied of the grace which should come to you"—"The Spirit of Christ which was in them did testify beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The second of these truths is taught us in these words—"Concerning this salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." And the third truth is taught in these words—"To them it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us, they did minister." [1]

The ancient prophets predicted that final salvation which will be bestowed on the people of God at the coming of Jesus Christ. "They prophesied of the grace which should come to us." "The grace which should come to us" has often been considered as a general expression for the blessings of the New Testament economy, on earth as well as in heaven—"the grace which came by Jesus Christ;" but if we look closely at the passage, we shall find the sole subject to be the final and complete salvation awaiting Christians, or, as it is expressed more fully, "the grace that is to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The words, "they prophesied of the grace which should come to us," are then just equivalent to, 'they predicted the final salvation which awaits the people of God.'

The same sentiment is, I apprehend, repeated in another form of words, when it is said, "the Spirit of Christ which was in them did testify beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

"All Scripture is given by divine inspiration." "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." [2] The Holy Ghost is termed "the Spirit of Christ," inasmuch as he is essentially related to the second person of the Trinity, who is Christ, as well as to the Father; and inasmuch as previously, no less than subsequently to his incarnation, all communications of the divine will were made by the Son through the Spirit. Never was there a time when the Father immediately revealed himself. "The only begotten Son, who is in his bosom, he declared him"—declared him by the Spirit. This divine person, in-

[1] John i. 17.

[2] 2 Tim. iii. 16. 2 Pet. i. 21. A valuable dissertation on the last of these passages is to be found in "Knappii Scripta Varii Argumenti."

spiring the prophets, taught them what things to reveal, and in what words to reveal them. To use the language of one of themselves, "He spake by them, and his word was on their tongue." [1]

The Spirit of Christ, then, "testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow them." These words naturally suggest, and have been ordinarily understood of, the personal sufferings and glories of Jesus Christ, the degradation and sorrows to which the incarnate Son was exposed, when, "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and the high dignity and inconceivable happiness to which he was raised when "God highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name," "angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him." [2] I am persuaded, however, that if we attend to the connection of the words, and to the words themselves, we will find they do not refer to the personal sufferings and glories of Christ, but to the sufferings of his people during the present state, and the glories which are to follow "in the last time," "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." It is not the sufferings of Christ personally, and the subsequent glories, which are the subject of the apostle's discussion, but the manifold trials to which Christians are exposed for a season, and the glory which is to be theirs in the last time. Looking at the construction of the passage, we naturally conclude that the clauses, "the prophets prophesied of the grace which is to be brought to us," and, "the Spirit of Christ testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow," are parallel—that the prophecy of the prophets, and the testimony of the Spirit of Christ, refer to the same thing.

Besides, the original expression is quite peculiar,[3] and is altogether different from that ordinarily rendered "the sufferings of Christ." [4] It is literally—"the sufferings in reference to Christ," that is, on Christ's account, in Christ's cause—or the sufferings till Christ, that is, the sufferings to be undergone by his body the Church, and by every member in particular, till he come "the second time, not as a sin-offering, but for their salvation." The sufferings till Christ,[5] and the subsequent glories, are then just "the afflictions of the present time, and the glory which shall be revealed in us," [6] and the apostle's statement is, the 'prophets, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, predicted the sufferings to which Christians are to be exposed in the present state, and the glories which are to be bestowed on them at the second coming of their Lord.'

Let us then show, by the quotation of particular passages from the Jewish Scriptures, that the final salvation of the people of God was indeed the subject of Old Testament prediction. Before commencing these quotations, however, let us recollect that we are not in the Old Testament declarations to expect what, for perspicuity and distinctness, can compare with the declarations "which they who have preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," have made to us. It is enough that we meet with declarations of a

[1] 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.
[2] Phil. ii. 8, 9. 1 Pet. iii. 22.
[3] Τὰ παθήματα εἰς Χριστόν.
[4] Τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ.
[5] See note A.
[6] Rom. viii. 18.

completeness of deliverance and a perfection of happiness, far surpassing anything ever yet enjoyed by the Church on earth—far surpassing anything the New Testament warrants her to expect till her Lord return. I think it right also to add, that I am not prepared to assert that all the passages which I quote have a *direct* reference to the *heavenly* state, though it is only in that state that the blessings predicted will be enjoyed in that perfection which will completely exhaust the meaning of the prophetic oracles.

The first prediction I quote, of the final and complete salvation of the people of God, is the prophecy of Enoch, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints."[1] This may seem a prophecy rather of the destruction of God's enemies than of the salvation of his people; but the two events are closely connected, and it seems to me probable that the apostle refers to this prophecy when he says, "Them who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him."[2]

The next prediction that I shall refer to, is that wonderful passage in the 19th chapter of Job, "Oh that my words were now written—Oh that they were printed in a book—that they were graven with an iron pen, and with lead in the rock forever: For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me."[3]

I now turn your attention to a passage in the 8th Psalm, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? for thou hast" (after he had been in a state equal to the angels as to immortality) "made him a little" (rather for a short season) "lower than the angels; and" (then, afterwards) "hast crowned him with glory and honor; thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hand—thou hast put all things under his feet."[4] That this refers to the final salvation of the redeemed from among men, is obvious from the apostle's commentary on it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He plainly applies it to redeemed man, "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak? But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all things in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But we see not yet all things put under him" (redeemed man): "But we see Jesus" (who was a man—the head of the ransomed race), "who was made a little" (for a season) "lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man." He suffered, and then was glorified, and thus shall it be with all his people.[5]

There are other quotations from the Psalms that deserve notice:

[1] Jude 14. [2] 1 Thess. iv. 14. [3] Job xix. 23–27.
[4] Psal. viii. 4–6. [5] Heb. ii. 5–9.

"As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fulness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light."[1]

The following quotations from the prophets Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea, and Malachi, will serve as further specimens of the manner in which the prophets prophesied of the grace which is to be brought to us, and in which the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, testified beforehand of the glories which were to follow the sufferings till Christ: "Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Sion, and before his ancients gloriously." "He shall swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it." "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise: Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "And many of them who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death! I will be thy plague: O grave! I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."[2] All these oracles speak of "suffering" as the lot of a peculiar people down to a particular period, and of "glory that is to follow" that period.

These prophetic oracles were but imperfectly understood by those who uttered them. We are not to suppose, however, that in uttering them, their minds were entirely passive, and that the Holy Spirit employed only their organs of speech to express words to which they attached no idea. They understood the meaning of the words; they were the expression of thoughts communicated to their minds. They knew that they referred to great blessings to be bestowed on the Church; but as to the precise nature and extent of these blessings, and as to the period when, and the manner in which, they were to be bestowed, they were much in the dark. "The prophecy came not

[1] Psal. xvii. 15; xxiii. 6; xxxvi. 7–9.

[2] Isa. xxiv. 23; xxv. 8; xxvi. 19; lx. 19, 20. Daniel xii. 2. Hosea xiii. 14. Mal. iii. 18, 19.

by their own will." "It was not of *self-interpretation.*"[1] Either the event referred to, or another explicatory revelation, was necessary to unfold fully its meaning.

These holy men were desirous of knowing all that could be known on the subject. They "inquired and searched diligently" concerning the salvation—the grace which was to come to us; "they searched what, or what manner[2] of time, the Spirit of Christ did signify, when he testified beforehand the glory which was to follow the sufferings until Christ." They wished to know when, and in what circumstances, these glorious predictions were to be fulfilled; and the means they employed for that purpose were the study of the Scriptures—comparing one passage with another, and fervent supplication to God. We have an example of this in the case of Daniel, in reference to another class of prophecies: "I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years; and I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek" (further insight as to what and what manner of time) "by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes."[3]

The prophets did not obtain all the information they desired; but it was revealed to them, that "not to themselves, but to us, they did minister those things which have been reported to us by those who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." "Those things which have been reported," &c.—are, I apprehend, the statements made by the apostles with regard to the final salvation of the people of God. It was revealed to the ancient prophets, that this glorious salvation was not to be enjoyed under the Jewish economy—that it was to take place "in the latter days"—"in the last times"—in the days of the Messiah. They were made to perceive that their predictions would be better understood, and therefore would be more useful to those who lived under the Messiah, than they were to themselves. "They ministered not to themselves, but to us;" that is, these predictions, uttered by them, though not useless to them (for they, like Abraham, wished to see the day of Christ, and "saw it afar off, and were glad,") are still more useful to us who have had them explained by a further revelation. The apostle's idea has been very finely illustrated by the following beautiful figure—"The sweet stream of their doctrine made its own banks fertile and pleasant, as it ran by and flowed still forwards to after ages, and, by the confluence of more such prophecies, grew larger as it proceeded, till it fell in with the main current of the gospel revelation; and thus united into one river clear as crystal, this doctrine of salvation hath still refreshed the city of God, and shall continue to do so till it empty itself into the ocean of eternity."[4]

How strikingly does the fact, that the *final* salvation was the subject of prophetic testimony from the beginning, illustrate at once the grandeur of this salvation, and the certainty that it shall in the appointed season be conferred on the people of God! That must be a glorious object to which God, by his Spirit, directed the admiring

[1] Ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται.—2 Pet. i. 20.

[2] Εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον. *Quod* innuit tempus *per se* quasi dicis æram suis numeris notatam. *Quale* dicit tempus *ex eventibus* variis noscendum.—BENGEL.

[3] Dan. ix. 2, 3.

[4] Leighton.

eyes of inspired prophets, while at the distance of so many thousand years. The highest conceptions we can form of it must come inconceivably short of the truth, when we think of it as the glorious termination of the whole wondrous systems of nature, and providence, and grace, which have been in operation for nearly six thousand years.

And the fact that it is the subject of Old Testament prophecies, proves not only its grandeur, but its security. We have "the word of prophecy more confirmed" [1] than the Old Testament believers. They had enough to make it most reasonable in them to believe, that whatever was predicted in the Scriptures should be fulfilled; but we have far more evidence than they had for the second coming of the Lord, and the complete salvation that is to accompany it. We have the fulfilment of the predictions as to the first coming, and many succeeding events, to confirm our faith. The final salvation of believers, at the second coming of the Lord, is one of those things which ought to be "most surely believed among us." If we do not believe it, it is not for want of evidence. "He will come the second time; and to all who look for him, he will come unto salvation."

If it was the duty of the ancient prophets to inquire into the meaning of the oracles revealed by them, respecting the great salvation of the people of God at the coming of the Lord, it certainly must be our duty to do so. Every part of divine revelation deserves and requires study; and, surely, those portions of it which have a reference to the coming of Christ, and the complete salvation of his people, have a peculiar claim on our attention. The extravagancies into which some students of prophecy have run, ought not to prevent us from imitating the ancient prophets in "inquiring and searching diligently concerning this salvation," knowing that a blessing is pronounced on him "that readeth, and on them that hear the words of that prophetic book which is the revelation of Jesus Christ." [2] "Were the prophets not exempted from the pains of search and inquiry, that had the Spirit of God not only in a high degree, but after a singular manner —how unbecoming, then, is slothfulness and idleness in us! Whether is it, that we judge ourselves advantaged with more of the Spirit than those holy men, or that we esteem the doctrines and mysteries of salvation, on which they bestowed so much of their labor, unworthy of ours? We do ourselves much injury, if we bar ourselves from sharing in our measure of the search of those same things that were the study of the prophets, and which, by their studying and publishing them, are made more accessible and easy to us. These are the golden mines in which the abiding treasures of eternity are to be found, and therefore worthy of all the digging and pains we can bestow upon them." [3]

[1] ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον.—2 Pet. i. 19. [2] Rev. i. 3.
[3] Leighton.

II.—THE FINAL HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS THE SUBJECT OF APOSTOLICAL PREACHING.

The final salvation of the people of God, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, is the subject of apostolical preaching. Things in reference to that salvation, concerning which the prophets prophesied and made inquiry, "have been reported to us by those who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

"Those who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," are, we apprehend, the apostles and other miraculously gifted teachers of the primitive age. They "preached the gospel;" that is, they published the glad tidings of a full, free, and everlasting deliverance from sin and all its dreadful consequences, through the mediation of the incarnate Son of God, who having expiated sin by the shedding of his own precious blood, which cleanses from all sin, has been raised from the dust of death, and invested with all power in heaven and earth, that he may be able to save to the uttermost all coming to God by him.

They preached this gospel "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." These words intimate, either that their preaching the gospel was accompanied with miraculous works, proving the truth and the divinity of what they taught,—works which they were enabled to perform by the Holy Ghost, whose miraculous influence was "sent down from heaven,"—that is, communicated to them by God:—or that their preaching was accompanied by the influence of the divine Spirit on the minds and hearts of those to whom it was addressed, leading them to attend to, to understand, and to believe it; "opening their understandings" to understand the truth, and "their hearts to receive the love of the truth, so as to be saved by it." Both these statements are true, and I think it not improbable that the words of the apostle were meant to include both. "The Lord the Spirit" "bore testimony to the word of grace" in both ways. "The great salvation was begun to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them who heard him; and God bore witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will."[1] When Peter was preaching the gospel to Cornelius and his friends, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." When Paul preached to the Thessalonians, "Our gospel," says he, that is, the gospel as preached by us, "came not to you in word only, but in power, and with the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance:"[2] with abundant evidence given by him, and apprehended by them.

These holy apostles of our Lord Jesus, who, in words taught not by men but by the Holy Ghost, preached the gospel with evidence and efficacy both derived from the divine Spirit, "made a report" concerning the things of which the prophets had prophesied, and into which they had inquired; that is, they made a report concerning the final salvation which is to be bestowed on believers at the second coming of their Lord. Much of their preaching was occupied in telling us what is the nature of that salvation; what Jesus Christ had

[1] Heb. ii. 3, 4. [2] Acts x. 44. 1 Thess. i. 5.

done and suffered in order to procure that salvation; how the individual sinner is to become a partaker of its blessings; and in showing that there is a present salvation from guilt and the dominion of sin, and the tormenting fear of divine displeasure and everlasting misery. But it also included in it a plain statement of the fact, that the full salvation of the Christian is not to be bestowed on him till the second coming of his Lord, and a description more or less particular of the varied and complete blessedness which was then to become his portion.

They "reported" these things. In making these declarations, they did not utter the dreams of their own imagination, or the deductions of their own reason. They merely "spoke the things which they had heard." They made known to others what had been made known to themselves. This was true of all they said; and, in particular, in reference to things which they reported concerning the final salvation of the people of God. "They did not follow cunningly devised fables when they made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus." "The things which God had laid up for them who love him, were things which eye had not seen, which ear had not heard, and which it never could have entered into the mind of man to conceive; but God revealed them to them by his Spirit;"[1] and of this revelation they made a faithful report.

Let us attend, then, to the report which those men who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven have made respecting this salvation, which is to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Their report refers both to what their Lord and Master revealed on this subject when he was on earth, and to what was revealed to them by that Holy Spirit whom he promised to send to them, to "lead them into all the truth."

Let us attend first, then, to the report they have given us of what our Lord, when on earth, revealed respecting this salvation. The following passages of Scripture contain that report:—"Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or

[1] 2 Pet. i. 16. 1 Cor. ii. 7–10.

thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me; and the righteous shall go away into life eternal." "In the end of the world the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth my word, and believeth on him who sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life. The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth; they who have done good to the resurrection of life." "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."[1]

The following passages embody revelations made directly to the apostles by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven:—"God will render to every man according to his deeds—to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life. Glory, honor, and peace shall be to every man that worketh good, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same, in hope that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now: And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. This corrupti-

[1] Matt. xix. 27–29; xxv. 31–40, 46; xiii. 41, 43. John iii. 16; v. 24, 26, 29; vi. 38, 40; xiv. 2–4.

ble must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. The saying that is written shall be brought to pass, Death is swallowed up in victory." "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory." "The Lord shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall first arise. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be forever with the Lord." "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." "An entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "We, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. I will give him a crown of life. He shall not be hurt with the second death. I will give him to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name, which no man knoweth save he who receiveth it; and I will give him the morning star. He shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; but will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out. I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." "And there shall be no more curse; and there shall be no night there; and they shall reign forever and ever." [1]

These are "the things which have been reported to us by them who have preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." There is a good deal in those descriptions which is dark through excessive brightness,—imperfectly intelligible by us, because descriptive of a state more pure, and felicitous, and glorious, than our limited, obtuse, sensualized faculties can distinctly apprehend; but what is clear, and what is dark, equally prove that this happiness, with the love in which it originates, has a height, and a depth, a length and a breadth, that pass knowledge. And O, delightful, solemnizing thought! this is no airy dream. "These are the true and faithful sayings of God." The period referred to is hastening on apace; and all this happiness must either be gained or lost by every one of us —gained or lost forever.

[1] Rom. ii. 6, &c.; Rom. viii. 18–25. 1 Cor. xv. 20, &c. 2 Cor. v. 2, 3. Col. iii. 3, 4. 1 Thess. iv. 13. 2 Thess. i. 6, &c. 2 Pet. i. 11. Rev. ii. passim; Rev. iii. passim; xxi. 4; xxii. 1–5.

III.—THE FINAL HAPPINESS OF CHRISTIANS THE SUBJECT OF ANGELIC STUDY.

It only remains that I turn your attention to the last view which the apostle gives us of the final salvation of Christians,—as the subject of angelic study: "Into these things the angels desire to look."

Into what things? Obviously into the things "of which the prophets prophesied, and into which they inquired"—into the things "reported to us by them who preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," that is, into the things respecting "the salvation prepared to be revealed in the last time"—into the things respecting "the grace to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Jesus Christ"—into those things the angels desire to look. The meaning of these words is obviously, the angels have an intense desire to understand the whole truth in reference to the final salvation of the people of God.

The angels here spoken of are, without doubt, "the elect angels,"—those holy, happy, unembodied spirits who retain their original integrity, who, infinitely beneath God, are yet far superior to men in the scale of being, who excel in wisdom and strength, and who find their happiness in contemplating the divine excellencies, and in doing the divine will.

These exalted spiritual beings are represented as "desirous to look" into the things which respect the final salvation of the redeemed from among men. The original expression is very beautiful. They are, with earnest desire bending down, fixing their intensest gaze on these things.[1] The peculiar mode of expression probably alludes to the figures of the cherubim above the mercy-seat, who with downcast eyes were represented as looking on the mercy-seat, as if seeking to penetrate the mystery of wisdom and kindness which the fiery law, covered by the blood-sprinkled golden propitiatory, embodied.

We have no reason to think that the angels directly know anything more about the final salvation of the redeemed among men than we do. It is "by the Church," that is, by the dispensations of God to the Church, that "the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" become acquainted with that revelation of "the manifold wisdom of God"[2] contained in the plan of human redemption. We have no doubt that they know all that is revealed in the Bible on this subject; and that, from their higher faculties, and their more diligent study, and their juster and more extended views of the divine perfections, and of what constitutes the happiness of intelligent creatures, they understand what is revealed there much better than we do.

But still they are not satisfied—they are desirous to understand these wondrous divine declarations more completely, and they are looking forward with intense desire to the period when fulfilment shall develop the full extent of their meaning. Nor is it at all difficult to divine what are the principles in the minds of angels which make them thus desire to look into these things. Enlightened curi-

[1] ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακύψαι. [2] Eph. iii. 10.

osity, piety, and benevolence, all combine in turning their attention with unwearied interest towards this subject.

Enlightened curiosity, or the desire of useful knowledge, is one of the characteristic features, we have reason to believe, of angelic as well as human minds. They know far more than we do, but there is much they do not know; and it is probable their thirst for knowledge exceeds ours just in a similar proportion to their possession of knowledge. It is easy to conceive how desirous they must be of knowing what it is for "corruption to put on incorruption," what it is for "mortality to be swallowed up of life." Enlightened philosophers have great pleasure in witnessing, and in expecting to witness, experiments tending to throw light on the processes of nature. A world in flames, the elements melting with fervent heat, and the heavens flying away like a scroll, and a new heaven and a new earth rising out of the fiery chaos, are spectacles which it is not wonderful the angels should look forward to, with eager desire and almost holy impatience.

Their piety interests them still more deeply in the subject. This salvation is to be the full manifestation of the divine excellencies, as displayed in the whole of that wonderful economy which shall then be completed. Angels will then see more of the power, and wisdom, and holiness, and benignity of God, than they had ever seen, than they had ever conjectured; and then, in the final pulling down of everything which opposes his will or obscures his glory, they will obtain the fullest gratification of the strongest wish of a loyal creature's heart—"that God may be all in all."

Their benevolence, too, keeps their minds fixed on the subject. "They are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." They "encamp round about them that fear God, and deliver them."[1] They have a kind interest in, a tender affection for, those committed to their care. They regard their manifold trials with a benignant pity, though themselves strangers to pain; and they take a generous interest in those events which are to consummate their blessedness. They wonder at the height of glory reserved for the redeemed among men; and, completely free from envy, they desire to understand what is meant by "all things being put under their feet," and by men who have overcome through the blood of the Lamb, sitting down with him on his throne, as he, when he overcame, sat down on his Father's throne.

The practical use to be made of these truths it is not difficult to discover. If these things have been reported to us by men who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, surely we should believe them. And if we believed them—if we really believed them—O what an influence would they have on our temper and conduct! A faith of this truth would induce the man, who is yet uninterested in the christian salvation, immediately to seek a share in its heavenly and spiritual blessings, and would make those who are interested in it very holy, very happy, very active, and perfectly contented amid all the calamities and trials of life.

[1] Heb. i. 14. Psal. xxxiv. 7.

What is the subject of the constant, intense contemplation of angels, surely deserves our most careful study. We are far more closely connected with, far more deeply interested in, the subject of study, than they. The salvation they desire to look into will promote, but it will but indirectly promote their happiness. Their happiness may be secure without reference to it. But as to us, this salvation must be ours, or we are undone forever and ever. It is *now* that an interest is to be obtained in it, if obtained at all. It is only by knowing and believing the truth about this salvation, that an interest in it can be obtained. Oh, then, let us, with intensest ardor, seek the knowledge of this salvation! If we die unacquainted with it, we die uninterested in it; and if we die uninterested in it, it never, never can become ours. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

NOTE A. p. 75.

Τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα—the *till-Christ* sufferings.—Gal. iii. 24. Εἰς Χριστὸν=εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ.—Phil. i. 10. The view we have taken of the expression τ. ε. Χ. π. κ. τ. μ. τ. ἀ. is substantially that taken both by Luther and Calvin. Calvin's remark savors of his ordinary exegetical sagacity: "Non tractat Petrus quid Christo sit proprium, sed de universali ecclesiæ statu disserit." Le Clerc's note is good: "Τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα intellexerit de piorum perpessionibus, Christi causa exantlandis: quas praeviderant obscurius Prophetæ, et gloriam fidelium post sequuturam; sed quarum nescierunt tempora nisi quod revelatum eis est, ipsorum ævo eas non eventuras. Hæc egregie consentiunt cum serie orationis Petri qui loquitur de malis quibus religionis causa afficiebantur Christiani." Winer, though he does not adopt our exegesis, distinctly says that the expression before us is incorrectly taken for Τὰ Χριστοῦ παθήματα.—Gram. Part iii. sec. 30, p. 157. The Τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα seem to denote the same thing as ἡ θλίψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ of the Apocalypse, chap. i. 9, of which John represents himself and those to whom he wrote as συγκοινωνοί.

DISCOURSE V.

CHRISTIAN DUTY—MEANS OF, AND MOTIVES TO, ITS PERFORMANCE.

1 Pet. i. 13–21.—Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Among the numerous mistaken notions of Christianity which prevail among its professors, few are more common, and none more fatal, than that in which it is viewed merely as a theory—a system of abstract principles, which, however true, are but remotely connected with human interests; and which, therefore, can but feebly influence human character and conduct. It is but too evident that the grand characteristic doctrines of Christianity, such as the trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, justification by faith, sanctification by divine influence, are, with many who readily admit their truth, and who would indeed be shocked at having their orthodoxy called in question, mere inoperative opinions, which exercise no more practical influence over their temper and conduct than the philosophical doctrines respecting the nature of space and time, or the size and distance of the celestial bodies, or the historical facts respecting the victories of Alexander or the discoveries of Columbus.

It is painful to think that it is no uncommon thing for a person to be able to talk plausibly about these principles of Christianity, to reason conclusively in their support, and to be zealous even to rancor against those who deny, or even doubt, their truth; while he yet continues a total stranger to their transforming efficacy, the slave of selfishness, malignity and worldliness. And what is the most lamentable part of this sad history, the infatuated man seems in a great measure unaware of the shocking inconsistency he is exhibiting, in displaying the most unchristian tempers in defence of christian truth. He mistakes his knowledge and zeal about certain propositions—which, it may be, embody christian truth—for Christianity itself; and looking, it would seem, on orthodoxy of opinion as the sum and substance of religious duty, wraps himself up in an overweening concep-

tion of his own attainments, and resigns himself to the pleasing dreams of a fancied security, from which but too frequently he is first and forever awakened by hearing the awful mandate, "Depart from me, I never knew you;" and by finding his place assigned him with the hypocrites, in the regions of hopeless misery.

It is an interesting inquiry, and, if properly conducted, would certainly elicit some important results—How comes it that men, with the Bible in their hands, can practise such fatal impositions on themselves? How comes it that the mere speculator should so readily conclude himself a sound believer? How comes it that the truth of doctrines should not only be readily admitted, but zealously maintained, while their appropriate influence is altogether unfelt, and indeed, steadily resisted? It would lead us too far out of our way just now to engage in such an inquiry; but I must be permitted to observe, that whatever influence deficient human representations of divine truth may have had in producing so mischievous and lamentable a result (and I believe that influence has been extensive and powerful), the truths of the Gospel themselves, and the scriptural representation of them, cannot be justly charged as in any degree the cause of this evil. The doctrines of the Gospel are of such a nature, that, if apprehended in their meaning and evidence,—if understood and believed,—they must, from the constitution of the mind of man, have a commanding influence over its principles of action; and these doctrines, as taught in the Bible, are not exhibited as mere abstract propositions, but are stated in such a manner as distinctly to show, how closely the belief of them is connected with everything that is good in disposition, and right in conduct. The speculatist in religion must not seek, for he will not find, in the Bible, an apology for his infatuation and inconsistency. On the contrary, he will meet with much to prove him altogether inexcusable.

The principles of Christianity are never in the New Testament exhibited in an abstract systematic form. They are interwoven with the injunctions to the cultivation of right dispositions, and to the practice of commanded duties, to which in truth they form the most powerful motives. The Author of Revelation, who is also the Author of our nature, and who is intimately acquainted with all its intellectual and moral obliquities in its present fallen state, has mercifully and wisely led those "holy men who spoke as they were moved by his Spirit," to guard their readers against that tendency to consider the doctrines of Christianity as mere matters of speculation, to which we have been adverting, by almost invariably following a statement of doctrine, with a statement of the practical consequences which that doctrine, understood and believed, is at once calculated and intended to produce.

Of this we have a very striking and instructive exemplification in the passage which we have here chosen as the subject of this discourse. In the preceding paragraph we have a statement of some of the most sublime and delightful peculiarities of Christian doctrine. We are instructed respecting that state of ineffable purity, dignity, and happiness, to which it is the purpose of God ultimately to raise men, through the mediation of his incarnate only begotten. This

state is described as "salvation"—deliverance from evil, in all its forms and degrees, forever—a holy happiness, filling to an overflow all the capacities of enjoyment during the entire eternity of man's being—as "an *inheritance*," intimating at once the gratuitousness of the nature, and the security of the tenure, of this happiness—"an inheritance incorruptible," having nothing in its own nature which can lead to decay or termination—"undefiled," its pure elements unmingled with any inferior or heterogeneous ingredients—"unfading," retaining unimpaired its power to communicate happiness—"laid up in heaven," pure and ethereal in its nature, and secured beyond the reach of fraud or of violence; while those for whom it is destined, those who, according to the divine fore-knowledge, have been selected by a spiritual separation from the world lying under the wicked one, that they may obey the truth, and be sprinkled by the blood of Jesus —that is, possess the blessings secured by his atoning sacrifice—are preserved for its enjoyment amid all the dangers they are exposed to, by the power of God and through the instrumentality of believing.

Still further to illustrate the glories of this salvation, this final state of blessedness, we are told, that unlike the present state, in which Jesus Christ is bodily absent from his chosen ones, and in which the imperfect knowledge they have of him is obtained entirely through the medium of believing, in which they are exposed to numerous and severe trials, in which complete deliverance from evil is the object of faith and hope, and in which, owing to these causes, they are often in heaviness—the future state of Christians is a state in which Christ Jesus is bodily present with them, and maintains intimate and uninterrupted intercourse with them—a state in which nothing of their trials but their blissful and glorious results remain—a state in which complete deliverance is the object of enjoyment—a state in which, in consequence of all these things, they "rejoice with a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory;" and, as if even all this were not enough to give us just ideas of the glories and felicities "which God has laid up for those who love him," we are told, that this state of final happiness is a leading subject of Old Testament prophecy, apostolical preaching, and angelical study.

These delightful and wonderful announcements are not brought forward as abstract principles—things to speculate and to talk about. They are no sooner stated than the apostle proceeds to urge them on Christians as most powerful motives to the duties of their high and holy calling, and equally powerful supports and consolations under the afflictions to which the discharge of those duties might expose them. "Wherefore," for those reasons, since these things are so—"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible

things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."

In this admirable paragraph we have a most instructive view—I. Of Christian duty; II. Of the means of performing it; and III. Of the motives to its performance. Of CHRISTIAN DUTY—described, first, generally, as obedience, Christians being exhorted to act "as obedient children," rather children of obedience; and then described more particularly—first negatively, "Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance;" and then positively—"Be holy in all manner of conversation." Of the MEANS OF PERFORMING CHRISTIAN DUTY; first, determined resolution—"Gird up the loins of your mind;" secondly, moderation in all our estimates, and desires, and pursuit of worldly objects—"Be sober;" thirdly, hope—"Hope to the end," hope perfectly; fourthly, fear—"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Of THE MOTIVES TO THE PERFORMANCE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY; first, the grandeur and excellence and security of the Christian inheritance, the full possession of which we can attain only by Christian obedience—"Wherefore," referring to the whole of the preceding description of the final state of happiness which awaits the saints; secondly, the holiness of God—"Be ye holy, for I am holy;" thirdly, the equity of God—"The Father on whom we call, without respect of persons, judgeth every man according to his works;" and fourthly, the wonderful provision which had been made for securing this holiness, in their having been redeemed, or bought back to God, by the blood of his own Son—"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."

Such is the outline which I shall attempt to fill up in the subsequent illustrations.

I.—CHRISTIAN DUTY.

§ 1.—*General view—obedience.*

According to the plan which has just been sketched, our attention must be first directed to the view of Christian duty with which we are presented in the passage before us.

Christian duty is in this paragraph represented generally as obedience. The apostle calls on Christians to conduct themselves "as obedient children," or rather children of obedience, which is the literal

rendering of the original terms. The apostle's meaning does not seem to be "Behave yourselves towards God as obedient children do towards their father," but act the part not of children of disobedience —a strong idiomatic phrase for disobedient persons; but of children of obedience—a strong idiomatic phrase for obedient persons.[1] Obedience, then, is the great duty of the Christian.

Obedience has always a reference to a law to be obeyed. Christians are often, in the epistolary part of the New Testament, represented as not only completely delivered from subjection to the law of Moses; but the state into which they are brought by the faith of the gospel is described as a being "not under law, but under grace."[2] Their pardon and salvation are not to be procured by their own obedience to any law, but to be received as the "gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." But though delivered from the Mosaic law, and though "not under law," in the sense of their final salvation being the stipulated reward of stipulated labor, they are "not without law to God; they are under the law to Christ."[3]

The law to which the Christian owes obedience is the revelation of the divine will contained in the Holy Scriptures. This law is, like its Author, "spiritual" and "holy," both "just and good."[4] It reaches not merely to action, but to the principles of action, and requires obedience of *mind*, obedience of *heart*, and obedience of *life*.

Obedience of mind consists in the implicit belief of whatever is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It is counting true whatever God has said, just because God has said it. A Christian is not left to think as he pleases. The command of God is, "Let the mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."[5] We must think in conformity to the mind of God, as made known in his word. We must receive what is written there, "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of the living God."[6]

This submission of mind to the authority of God is the fundamental part of christian obedience, and naturally leads to that obedience of heart which is equally required by that law, which is exceeding broad. By obedience of heart, I understand a state of the affections corresponding to the character of God as revealed in the manifestation he has made of his will. He appears in that manifestation infinitely venerable and estimable, and amiable and trustworthy; and reverence and esteem, and love and confidence, are the dispositions which these excellencies ought to excite in our minds. To "sanctify the Lord God in our hearts," to "make him our fear and dread," to "love him with our heart, and our soul, and our strength, and our mind," and "to trust in him at all times,"[7]—this is the obedience of the heart.

As the obedience of the mind naturally leads to the obedience of the heart, as it is impossible to venerate and esteem, and love and trust God, without knowing and believing that he is venerable and excellent, and amiable and trustworthy, and impossible to believe him

[1] Τέκνα ὑπακοῆς is a Hebraism of the same kind as *τέκνα φωτός, υἱοὶ ἡμέρας, υἱὸς ἀπωλείας, υἱοὶ ἀπειθείας, τέκνα ὀργῆς, τέκνα κατάρας.*

[2] Rom. vi. 14. [3] 1 Cor. ix. 21. [4] Rom. vii. 12, 14.

[5] Phil. ii. 5. [6] 1 Thess. ii. 13.

[7] 1 Pet. iii. 15. Isa. viii. 13. Matt. xxii. 37. Psal. lxii. 8.

possessed of those excellencies without exercising those dispositions, so the obedience of the mind and of the heart naturally express themselves in the obedience of the life.

The obedience of the life is twofold—active and passive: the one consisting in conscientiously doing whatever God commands; and the other consisting in cheerfully submitting to whatever God appoints. It is the duty of the Christian to "walk in all God's commandments and ordinances blameless," to be "patient in tribulation," and even to "count it all joy when brought into manifold trials."[1] Such is the general idea of obedience as the duty of the Christian: a conformity of mind and heart and conduct to the revealed will of God.

There are certain general characters which belong to this obedience when it is genuine, and which distinguish it from all counterfeits. It is *implicit* obedience. The Christian not only believes what God reveals, but he believes it because God has revealed it; he not only does what God commands, but he does it because God has commanded it; he not only submits to what God appoints, but he submits to it because God has appointed it. It is obviously just so far as the faith and conduct of a Christian have this character, that they deserve the name of obedience at all.

The obedience which forms the sum and substance of Christian duty, is *impartial* and *universal* obedience. If it be implicit, it will be impartial and universal. If I really regard the will of God at all, I will regard it whenever I see it clearly manifested. I will not, among duties commanded with equal clearness, choose which I will perform, and which I will neglect. I will "esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and I will hate every false way."[2]

Cheerfulness is another essential character of Christian obedience. External obedience may often be constrained and mercenary; but the obedience of the life, which proceeds from, and is the expression of, the obedience of the mind and heart, cannot be either. In obeying, the Christian is doing what he knows to be right; and what he feels to be good. He "consents to the law that it is good." He "delights in the law after the inward man." When his heart is enlarged by just and impressive views of the reasonableness and excellence of the divine law, he runs in the ways of God's commandments, and finds that "in keeping them there is great reward."[3]

The obedience which is the sum of the Christian's duty, in fine, is not an occasional and temporary, but a *habitual* and a *persevering* obedience. It is the business of his life: "Whatsoever he does, whether in word or in deed," ought to be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him." "Whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does," he ought to do "all to the glory of God." His obedience ought to be "a patient continuance in well-doing," "a steadfast, immovable, constant abounding in the work of the Lord," "a forgetting the things which are behind, a reaching forth to those which are before, a pressing to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."[4]

[1] Luke i. 6. Rom. xii. 12. James i. 2. [2] Psal. cxix. 128.
[3] Rom. vii. 16, 22. Psal. cxix. 32; xix. 11.
[4] Col. iii. 17. 1 Cor. x. 31. Rom. ii. 7. 1 Cor. xv. 58. Phil. iii. 13, 14.

§ 2.—*Particular view of Christian Duty.* (1.) *Negative.* (2.) *Positive.*

The duty of Christians is not only described generally as obedience, but more particularly, first, negatively, as a "not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts in their ignorance," and then, positively, as a "being holy in all manner of conversation." Let us shortly attend to these very instructive descriptions of Christian duty.

(1.) The apostle's negative statement is, that Christians ought not to fashion themselves "according to the former lusts in their ignorance." While a man continues unacquainted with the meaning and evidence of the revelation which God has made of himself in his word —and this is the case with every unbeliever,—he is in a state of ignorance respecting the most important of all subjects, the character and will of God—the duty and happiness of man. While in that state, he does not "fashion himself," that is, regulate his conduct—form his character, "according to the will of God," but according to his "lusts,"—his desires. The desires which are natural to men while they are unrenewed, are the principles which regulate their conduct and form their character. One man loves pleasure, another loves money, another loves power, another loves fame. The ruling desire, or lust, is the principle which forms the character and guides the conduct.

Now the Christian, being no longer in ignorance, but knowing and believing the revelation God has made of his will, must no longer permit his character to be fashioned by those desires, to the guidance of which, when in a state of ignorance, he delivered himself up. All these desires, so far as they are sinful, must be mortified, and, even so far as they are innocent, they must cease to be governing principles, and must be subordinated to a higher principle—the principle of submission of mind and heart to the will of God.

The objects of these desires are sensible and present things—things which are "in the world;" so that the not fashioning ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance, and our not being "conformed to this world," are but two different modes of expressing the same thing. An unregenerated man's character is entirely formed by the desires of his fallen nature, excited by their appropriate objects in the present world. It was once so with the Christian, but it must be so with him no longer. On the contrary, "as he who has called him is holy, so must he be holy in all manner of conversation."

(2.) This is the apostle's positive statement with respect to Christian duty. There is no word, I apprehend, to which more indistinct ideas are generally attached, than holiness; yet, surely, there is no word of the meaning of which it is of more importance we should have a clear and accurate conception; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."[1] The clearest and the justest idea we can form of holiness, as a quality of an intelligent creature, is conformity of mind and will with the Supreme Being, who alone is, in all the extent

[1] Heb. xii. 14.

of meaning belonging to the word, holy. Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervors, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills. God's mind and will are to be known from his word; and, so far as I really understand and believe God's word, God's mind becomes my mind, God's will becomes my will, and, according to the measure of my faith, I become holy.

And this conformity of mind and will to God—this holiness—is to be manifested "in all manner of conversation." "Conversation," here, as usually in the New Testament, signifies not colloquial intercourse, but general conduct.[1] In every part of your character and conduct, let it appear that the ruling principles of your conduct, the forming principles of your character, are no longer what they once were—your lusts, your natural desires, but the mind and the will of him who has called you, even God, who is holy; his mind and will having become your mind and will, through the knowledge and belief of the truth, make it evident, that these are now the principles by which your character is formed and your life governed. In everything show that you think as God thinks, that you will as God wills, that you love what God loves, that you hate what he hates, that you choose what he chooses, that wherein he finds enjoyment, you seek enjoyment. Such is a short account of the Christian's duty.

There are two conclusions to which these observations necessarily conduct us, highly worthy of considerate reflection. First, that there are many who call themselves Christians, who have no title to that name, habitual violators of God's law, strangers to the very principle of obedience, still "walking according to the course of this world, serving divers lusts and pleasures."[2] How vain—how much worse than vain, is their profession—how dangerous their circumstances—how awful, if they continue in their present state, their final doom! The second conclusion is, that those who are really Christians are still very far, indeed, from being what they ought to be—from being what they might be. The best Christians, then, need to have such exhortations addressed to them as these: "Follow holiness," seek growing conformity of mind and heart to God, and recollect this can be obtained only by growing knowledge and faith of the truth. Though already not of the world, even as their Lord is not of the world, they need the great Intercessor continually to pray for them, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."[3]

II.—MEANS FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

We now proceed to direct your minds to the view here given us of the means of performing this duty. If we would be "children of obedience, not fashioning ourselves after our former lusts in our ignorance"—if we would be "holy in all manner of conversation," it is necessary that we should "gird up the loins of our mind"—that

[1] The only exception is Phil. iii. 20, where the word in the original is not *ἀναστροφή*, but *πολίτευμα*—citizenship.

[2] Eph. ii. 2, 3. Tit. iii. 3.

[3] John xvii. 7.

we should be "sober"—that we should "hope to the end"—and that we should "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear." Determined resolution, moderation, hope, and fear, are the means here prescribed for our realizing, in our own character and conduct, those views of Christian duty presented to us by the apostle. Let us shortly attend to them in their order.

§ 1.—*Determined Resolution a means of Christian Obedience.*

Determined resolution is one of the instrumental means which we ought to employ, in order to our complying with the apostle's exhortation. "Gird up," says he, "the loins of your mind." The ancients were accustomed to wear loose, flowing garments, which, though graceful and agreeable on ordinary occasions, were found inconvenient when strenuous and long-continued exertion became necessary. In such cases it was usual to gather together the folds of the flowing drapery, and, having wrapped them round the waist, to confine them by a belt or girdle. This was termed girding up the loins.

The phrase is here used figuratively. To inquire, as some have done, what are meant by the loins of the mind, and to reply—the sensual affections and appetites, the lower propensities of human nature; and to inquire what is meant by girding up the loins of the mind, and to reply—the restraint and mortification of these debasing propensities, is rather ingeniously to play with, than satisfactorily to explain, the phraseology of the sacred writer. "To gird up the loins of the mind," is to gird up the loins mentally; that is, to cultivate that state of mind of which the girding up of the loins is the natural emblem. When a man has nothing to do, or nothing which requires any thing like exertion, he permits his robes to flow in graceful negligence around him; or, even if called on to a sudden, transient, though vigorous effort, he may not think it worth his while to make any change in his dress; but if he has a work to perform, which requires at once strenuous and continued exertion,—if he is about, not to take a walk for pleasure, but to undertake a journey on business, then he girds up his loins. The action is naturally emblematical of that state of mind in which a person contemplates a course of conduct, which, while he considers it as highly eligible and indispensably obligatory, he plainly perceives to involve in it serious difficulty, and to demand the persevering putting forth of all his active energies.

The apostolical command, "Gird up the loins of your mind," is equivalent to 'Set yourselves with resolute determination to the performance of these duties. Impress on your minds a sense of their importance, obligation, advantages, and necessity. Let there be no "halting between two opinions." Considering Christian obedience as the business of life; a business, the right discharge of which will require all the care you can devote to it; a business, in the prosecution of which no exertion must be spared, no sacrifice grudged; enter on it with a determination, that whatever may be neglected this shall be attended to; and with a distinct understanding, that this is

[1] Exod. xii. 11. 1 Kings xviii. 46. Job xxxviii. 3; xl. 7. Luke xii. 35.

not to be an occasional employment for your by-hours, but the habitual occupation to which all your time and all your faculties are to be devoted.'

Such a spirit of determined resolution is absolutely necessary to the proper performance of the duties involved in a life of Christian obedience. These duties are numerous, varied, and laborious. They are all in the highest degree reasonable, and to a being whose moral constitution is in a completely sound state, none of them would be in the slightest degree grievous. The yoke of Christian duty should be very easy—the burden of Christian duty should be very light. But who that believes the declarations of Scripture—who that is in any degree conversant with the realities of Christian experience, needs to be told that the remains of native depravity, acted on by the temptations of Satan, and by the influence of a world lying under his power, often make irksome what ought to be delightful, difficult what should be easy, laborious what should be spontaneous? How endless, varied, and diversified are the circumstances which have a tendency to induce spiritual sloth, and make us become "weary in well-doing!" How apt are we to turn out of the way, instead of proceeding right onwards; to loiter, when we should quicken our pace; to think we have "attained, and are already perfect," when we have little more than entered on our Christian course! How often, when the spirit is willing, is the flesh weak! Oh, how does "the flesh war against the spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would!" [1]

To meet this state of things, nothing is more necessary than that resolute determination here recommended by the apostle. Without it we shall make but little progress in our Christian course, and the little progress we make, will be productive of but little comfort to ourselves—little glory to our Lord; everything will be a difficulty; we shall be constantly stumbling, and but too often falling. But with it, our progress will be steady and rapid, delightful to ourselves, comfortable to our brethren, honorable to our Lord; we shall "forget the things which are behind, reach forward to those which are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." [2]

This resolute determination must not rest on the mistaken opinion of our possessing in ourselves all the energies, which are necessary for the successful performance of all the duties implied in Christian obedience, but on an humble yet confident reliance on the promises of God, securing for us all those supplies of divine influence which are requisite for this purpose. It is the faith of the truth, and that alone, that can brace the mind for spiritual work and warfare. It is this which makes us "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." [3]

Let us, then, like the Israelites when leaving Egypt, "gird up our loins," resolved to prosecute our journey, undeterred by the fury of our spiritual enemies endeavoring to bring us again into bondage, by the billows of the Red Sea of persecution, or by the endless toils and troubles of the wilderness of this world, till, having passed the Jordan of death, we shall lay by the staff and the sword for the palm and the

[1] Gal. v. 17. [2] Phil. iii. 13. [3] Eph. vi. 10.

harp, and exchange the humble garb of the pilgrim for the flowing robes of the victor. Meanwhile, to use the language of the heavenly Leighton, "Let us remember our way, and where we are, and keep our robes girt up, for we walk among briers and thorns, which, if we let them down, will entangle and stop us, and possibly tear our garments; we walk through a world where there is a great mire of sinful pollutions, and which therefore cannot but defile them: and the crowd we are among will be ready to tread on them; yea, our own feet may be entangled in them, and so make us stumble and possibly fall." Our only safety is in girding up the loins of our mind.

§ 2.—*Moderation a means of Christian Obedience.*

Moderation is another of the instrumental means which the apostle recommends for the performance of the duty of Christian obedience. "Be sober."[1] To be sober, in ordinary language, is descriptive of that particular variety of the duty of temperance which is opposed to the undue use of intoxicating liquors. But the word used by the apostle has a much more extensive meaning. The sobriety or temperance of the apostle is another word for *moderation*, and is descriptive of that state of the mind, and affections, and behavior, in reference to "things seen and temporal," "the present world," by which a Christian should be distinguished.

The foundation of true christian sobriety or moderation lies in a just estimate of the intrinsic and comparative value of "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,"[2]—all that the eye or the flesh desires—all of which living men are apt to be proud. The Christian does not consider the wealth, and the honor, and the pleasures of this world, as destitute of value; but he sees that that value is by no means what the deluded worshippers of Mammon suppose it to be. He sees that the possession of them cannot make him happy, nor the want of them make him miserable. They cannot obtain for him the pardon of his sin, they cannot pacify his conscience, they cannot transform his character, they cannot give him life in death, they cannot secure him of happiness forever. They appear to him polluted with sin, replete with temptation, pregnant of danger.

With these views, he is moderate in his desires for them, moderate in his pursuit of them, moderate in his attachment to them while he enjoys them; moderate in his regrets for them; when he is deprived of them. This is christian sobriety. It is for those who have earthly relatives to be as if they had them not; for "those who weep to be as though they wept not; for those who rejoice to be as though they rejoiced not; for those who use this world to use it as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of this world passeth away."[3]

The cultivation of this sobriety is of the utmost importance to the

[1] Subsequent reflection has made me doubt, whether "watchfulness," or freedom from mental intoxication, be not the apostle's idea here rather than moderation. The original word favors this view. These mental habits are described, Discourses xviii. xxiii.; and the usefulness, and, indeed, necessity, of them as instrumental means for the performance of Christian duty are self-evident.

[2] 1 John ii. 6.

[3] Cor. vii. 29–31.

proper performance of the duties of christian obedience. The supreme love of the world is inconsistent with christian obedience altogether. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon." [1] And, as the supreme love of the world necessarily makes and keeps men "children of disobedience," so the undue love of the world prevents even those who are "the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus," from being, in so high a degree as they ought to be, "the children of obedience." What is it that makes obedience so often to be felt a tiresome task, but the undue love of the world: and how do the commandments of our Lord become to us not grievous, but by our victorious faith overcoming the world? [2] It has been finely said, that "the same eye cannot both look up to heaven and down to earth at the same time." And the heart must be emptied of the love of the world, that it may be filled with that love of God, which is at once the seminal principle and the concentrated essence of all christian obedience. Those who are quite engrossed with earth's business and pleasures cannot be "seeking a country—a better country, that is, an heavenly." They who, by their immoderate attachment to earth, show they are at home, cannot be "strangers and sojourners." The Captain of the Lord's host, our New Testament Gideon, will not own as his soldiers those who lie down to drink of the streams of earth's delight, but only those who, in passing, drink of them with their hand, as of the brook in the way.[3]

It is much to be desired that professors of Christianity were more deeply impressed with this truth,—that the supreme love of the world is utterly inconsistent with the very existence of Christianity; and that real Christians were more deeply impressed with the kindred truth, of the utter inconsistency of an undue love of the world with a healthy, thriving Christianity, a Christianity bringing forth the fruits of true holiness and true peace, fruits which are to the glory of God, and to the happiness of the believer. It is, my brethren, this worldliness, this want of christian sobriety, which spreads such a withering blight over the blossoms of fair profession, and prevents their ever ripening into fruit. To quote again the spiritual commentator already referred to: "All immoderate use of the world and its delights injures the soul in its spiritual condition, makes it sickly and feeble, full of spiritual distempers and inactivity, benumbs the graces of the Spirit, and fills the soul with sleepy vapors, makes it grow secure and heavy in spiritual exercises, and obstructs the way and motion of the Spirit of God in the soul." [4] If we would, then, be children of obedience, if we would not fashion ourselves according to the former lusts, if we would be holy in all manner of conversation, let us "be sober."

Let each of us, ere we proceed further, examine himself. Am I girding up the loins of my mind? Am I, in a dependence on the promised aids of divine influence, honestly, heartily, determined to make the service of God, through Christ Jesus, my great business, and to make the life I live in the flesh a life of subjection to his

[1] Matt. vi. 24. [2] 1 John v. 4.
[3] Leighton. Heb. xi. 13, 14. Judges vii. 4–7. [4] Leighton.

will, and obedience to his law, by making it a life of faith in his Son? Am I sober, temperate, moderate, in all things, in my estimates, my desires, my pursuits, my enjoyments, my sorrows? If we are not girding up the loins of our minds, if we are not sober, we are not Christians. We may be calling Christ Lord, Lord; but we are not doing the things which he says to us; and unless a thorough change take place, to us, at last, must be addressed these heart-withering words—"Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity."

§ 3.—*Hope a means of Christian Obedience.*

We proceed now to observe, that Hope is the third means recommended by the apostle for securing the proper performance of the duty of christian obedience. If you would be "children of obedience," if you would "not fashion yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance," if you would "be holy in all manner of conversation," you must "hope to the end; for the grace which is to be brought to you at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"The grace," or favor, "which is to be brought to Christians at the revelation of Christ Jesus," that is, when Christ Jesus is revealed, is that perfection of holy happiness to which they are to be raised at the close of the present state of things—"the salvation that is ready," prepared, "to be revealed in the last time"—"the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them"—"the glory that is to follow" the second coming of the Lord.

For this "grace," this manifestation of his sovereign favor,—for the salvation of Christ from the beginning to the end is of grace—the apostle exhorts Christians to "hope," and to "hope to the end."

He exhorts them to hope for it, to expect it, to consider it as something that is absolutely secure, something that in due season they shall certainly enjoy; and he exhorts them to "hope to the end,"[1] that is, either to hope perfectly, to cherish an undoubting confidence, or to persevere in hoping to the very close of life, "not casting away their confidence," but "holding it fast to the end," knowing that "they have need of patience," that is, "the patience of hope;" in other words, knowing that they must persevere in hoping, in order that they may do the will of God, and that "they may obtain the promise," that is, the promised blessing.[2]

The practical truths here taught by the apostle are these—that it is the duty of Christians to cultivate a persevering, confident hope of final salvation; and that the cultivation of this persevering, confident hope of final salvation, is a necessary and important means of enabling them to perform the duties of christian obedience.

(1.) That it is the duty of Christians, believers of the truth as it is in Jesus, to cherish the hope of eternal happiness, is exceedingly plain. God has distinctly stated, that "whosoever believeth on Christ Jesus shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life;" and surely it must be the duty of the Christian to believe what God says,

[1] Τελείως. [2] Heb. x. 35, 36.

and to expect what God has promised.[1] For an unbelieving and impenitent person, continuing in unbelief and impenitence, to hope for eternal life is the extreme of presumption. That were to believe something which God has never said—that were to expect something which God has never promised. Nay, that were to believe the reverse of what God says—to expect the reverse of what God has declared. His declarations are, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." "He that believeth not, shall be damned."[2] The unbeliever who is cherishing the hope of "*grace* to be brought" to him, continuing an unbeliever "at the revelation of Jesus Christ," is trusting to a hope which will make him "ashamed and confounded world without end." For He will be "revealed then in flaming fire, to take vengeance on such as know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son."[3]

But let this impenitent man change his mind; let this unbeliever but credit the testimony of God, counting it a faithful saying, that "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses; seeing he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin in our room, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him," —and immediately that hope which, in his previous state, it would have been absurdity and error, folly and presumption, in him to cherish, naturally grows up in his mind; its enjoyment is one of his highest privileges, and its cultivation one of his most important duties.

When we call on Christians to cultivate hope, we would press upon their attention the importance of three things. First, let them endeavor to obtain clear and ever-extending views of that holy happiness which is the object of their hope, of that "grace which is to be brought to them at the coming of our Lord Jesus." Let them not rest satisfied with some indistinct general notion of it as a state of deliverance from all suffering, and of the enjoyment of every species of blessedness; but let its character as a state of holy happiness be familiar to their minds; a state of endearing and transforming communion with the Holy, Holy, Holy One, a seeing Him as he is, a being like him, a beholding his face in righteousness, a being satisfied with his likeness, a being holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect.

Secondly, let them never forget that the holy ground on which their hope of obtaining this blessedness rests, is the sovereign mercy of Him whose nature as well as name is love, exercised in perfect consistency with, in glorious illustration of, his righteousness, through the obedience to death of his only begotten Son, made known to them in the word of the truth of the gospel. That appeared to them the only ground of hope, when, in the hour of conviction, every refuge of lies was swept away, and they were made to see that, so far as depended on themselves, so far as depended on the universe of creatures, there was no hope for them. They were then absolutely "without hope" till "the hope set before them in the gospel" was disclosed to their mind. There is no other ground of hope. Never, Christians, shift from this foundation—never attempt to add to this foundation. "Hold fast the beginning of your confidence, steadfast

[1] John iii. 16.
[2] Luke xiii. 3, 5. Mark xvi. 16.
[3] 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.
[4] 2 Cor. v. 19–21.

to the end." Let your hope of eternal life be that of a sinner who knows that eternal death is his merited portion, but who, believing, because God has said it, that "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," gladly and gratefully receives what is freely given him of God, and setting to his seal that God is true, confidently trusts, humbly expects, that God will do as he has said.

Thirdly, in hoping for this holy happiness entirely on the ground of sovereign mercy, let Christians expect to obtain it only in the way in which God has promised to bestow it on them. To expect eternal life in a course of thoughtlessness and sin, is to expect what God has never promised. It is "through faith and patience" that the promised blessing is to be inherited. It is "in a patient continuance in well-doing," that "glory, honor, and immortality" are to be expected. It is "after doing the will of God that we are to receive the promise." [1] Let Christians, keeping these three things in view, expect only what God has promised—expect this only on the ground that He who is infinite in kindness, and wisdom, and power, and faithfulness, has promised it—and expect it only in the way and by the means which he has appointed for obtaining it; and it is impossible for them to be too confident in that "hope for the grace which is to be brought to them at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(2.) This confident, persevering hope of final salvation, is one of the most necessary and important means for enabling a Christian to perform the duties of christian obedience. There are some theologians who would represent the performance of the duties of christian obedience as the ground of the hope of eternal life. These are not wise builders. They turn things upside down, and place the superstructure in the room of the foundation. Till a man has, through the faith of the gospel, obtained the hope of eternal life, he will never take a step in that path of filial obedience which is the only road to heaven, and the more he has of a well-grounded hope of eternal life, the more rapidly will he run along that road, the more easily will he master the difficulties, and surmount the obstacles which threaten to prevent his progress. When by a lively hope the Christian is enabled to feast on the clusters of the grapes of the promised land, which faith has furnished him with in the wilderness, he is disposed to say with Caleb, 'It must be a good land; and, seeing it is a good land, let us go up and possess it. What though hosts of spiritual enemies oppose our progress; what though the Jordan of death, that river over which there is no bridge, roll his waters deep and dark between us and the Canaan above, He who is infinite in power and in faithfulness, hath promised to make us "more than conquerors," and to bring us to, and make us reside forever in, that good land.'

"It is," to borrow the well-considered language of Leighton, "a foolish misgrounded fear, and such as argues inexperience of the nature and workings of divine grace, to imagine that the assured hope of salvation will beget unholiness and presumptuous boldness in sin. Our apostle is not so sharp-sighted as these men think themselves: he apprehends no such matter: he, indeed, supposes the contrary as unquestionable: he takes not assured hope and holiness as enemies,

[1] Rom. ii. 7. Heb. vi. 12; x. 36.

but joins them as near friends. Hope perfectly, in order to your being holy in all manner of conversation. The more assurance of salvation, the more holiness—the more delight in it, the more study of it, as the only way to that end; and as labor is then most pleasant when we are made surest that it shall not be lost, nothing doth make the soul so nimble and active in obedience as this oil of gladness, this assured hope of glory." Accordingly, the apostle John says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." In perfect accordance with these two apostles, their beloved brother Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, declares his desire "that every one of them would give all diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end;" would sedulously cultivate an unshaken, confident, persevering hope of eternal life, in order that they might not be "slothful, but followers of them who, through faith, and patience, are now inheriting the promises." [1]

This is, I am persuaded, the only way of securing habitual christian obedience. Let Christians, then, learn to say with the Psalmist, "But I will hope continually; and I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only." [2]

It may be proper, before leaving this part of the subject, to remark, that as the hope of eternal life has a powerful influence on christian obedience, so christian obedience has a powerful influence on the hope of eternal life. We have seen that christian obedience is not the ground of the hope of eternal life, but it is its evidence. It is in the nature of things impossible that a Christian, while negligent about the duty of obedience, should enjoy in any high degree the privilege of hope. It is the same truth which inspires hope and stimulates to obedience; and if it is not present to the mind doing the latter, it cannot be present doing the former. It has been finely said, "The greatest affliction does not damp the hope of eternal life, so much as the smallest sin; affliction often renders hope more vigorous, sin uniformly weakens it." [3] If Christians would be "obedient children," they must "hope to the end;" and if they would "hope to the end," they must be "obedient children." These two things are linked together by divine appointment; and "what God has thus joined, let no man attempt to put asunder."

§ 4.—*Fear a means of Christian Obedience.*

Fear is the fourth and last instrumental means which the apostle prescribes for securing the performance of the duties of christian obedience. If we would be "children of obedience," if we would not "fashion ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance, if we would "be holy in all manner of conversation," then must we "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear."

This injunction may not at first view appear to harmonize well with that which we have just been illustrating. It may be said,

[1] 1 John iii. 2, 3. Heb. vi. 11, 12. [2] Psal. lxxi. 14–16.
[3] Leighton.

"does not perfect love cast out fear?" [1] and must not "the full assurance of hope," which the apostle has been recommending, cast it out also? The discrepancy is apparent only, not real. The fear which the apostle recommends, so far from being inconsistent with love and hope, and destructive of that comfort and happiness to which they give origin, naturally grows out of those views of the divine character which excite love and hope, and acts the part of guardian to the comfort and happiness which they produce in the mind.

The fear recommended by the apostle is beyond doubt the fear of offending God, and of the consequences of offending God. Such a fear is not only consistent with love and hope, but is their inseparable companion. The more highly I value the favor of God, the more must I fear that which, in the degree in which it prevails, deprives me of the sense of this favor. The more I delight in the anticipation of the holy happiness of heaven, the more must I be afraid of that, the direct and certain effect of which is to deprive me of this delight. The happiness of Christians is in the love of God, and the light of his countenance is the life of their life. It matters little to them that the world frowns on them, if he smiles; and it matters little to them that the world smiles, if he frowns. Nothing in the world can deprive them of the tokens of their Father's love but sin; and, therefore, they consider it as of all things the most terrible. "By this fear of the Lord they are made to depart from evil." It is implanted in their hearts by God for this express purpose, "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." [2] It naturally leads them to keep at a distance from sin; to guard against temptation, to beware of what may lead to the interruption of their delightful communion with their reconciled Father; and involve in clouds of perplexity and doubt the prospect of future blessedness. "Happy is the man who *thus* feareth always." [3] When a Christian believer thinks of the remains of corrupt principle within, and the number and force of temptations without; when he sees how many fall before these temptations, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, surely it must be good for him to "be not high-minded, but fear." [4]

There is a system which passes with many for a peculiarly pure Christianity, the object of which seems to be to set believers free from every species of fear as inconsistent with faith, which, according to them, consists in believing that, at all events, the individual shall be saved. Every species of fear is run down under the name of unbelief. Now, it is quite plain the apostles had a very different view of the subject, since Paul exhorts the Hebrew Christians to "fear, lest, a promise of entering into God's rest being left to them, any of them should seem to come short of it," [5] and since Peter, in the words of our text, exhorts Christians to "pass the time of their sojourning here in fear." They inculcate fear as a means of preventing unbelief and its consequences.

It is justly remarked by a judicious divine,[6] that both "believers

[1] John iv. 18. [2] Prov. xvi. 6. Jer. xxxii. 40. [3] Prov. xxviii. 14.
[4] Rom. xi. 20. [5] Heb. iv. 1.
[6] The late Archibald M'Lean, from whose writings I have derived much advantage. It may be worth stating, that when introduced to the late Robert Hall, one of the first

and unbelievers have their fears, but they arise from very different sources, and have quite opposite effects. The fears of unbelievers arise from unworthy thoughts of God; a distrust of his power, faithfulness, and goodness; and, also, from a prevailing love of the present world and its enjoyments, which makes them more afraid of worldly losses and sufferings for righteousness' sake, than of forfeiting the divine favor," or incurring the divine displeasure. "Such fears not only indispose the mind to obedience, but lead directly to sin. But that godly fear which is proper to believers, arises from a just view, reverence, and esteem of the character of God, and a supreme desire of his favor, as their chief happiness; and is a fear lest they offend him and incur his just displeasure. Such a fear outweighs all the allurements of sin on the one hand, and all the terrors of the present sufferings on the other."

Such is the fear inculcated by the prophet when he says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your heart, and let him be your fear and your dread, and he shall be for a sanctuary." Such is the fear enjoined by our Lord on his disciples: "Fear not him who, after he has killed the body, hath no more that he can do; but fear him who, after he hath killed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell fire; yea, I say unto you, fear him." Such is the fear prescribed by the apostle in the passage before us, as an instrumental means for securing christian obedience: "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." [1]

This fear must be habitually exercised during the whole continuance of our mortal life. None are so highly advanced in grace here below, as to be out of the need of this principle; but when their pilgrimage is finished, and they are come home to their Father's house above, there shall be no more fearing. There are no dangers there, and therefore no fear. They shall indeed have, in a higher degree than ever, a holy reverence of the Divine Majesty, but the fear of offending God will pass away with the possibility of offending him. In that blessed world there is neither sin, nor temptation to sin; no more conflict, no more danger; the victory is complete, the peace secure, the triumph eternal.[2]

These observations have been addressed exclusively to Christians. But I am afraid there are persons now hearing me who are not Christians. I call on them to fear: they have good reason; I dare not call on them to hope, while they continue in unbelief and impenitence. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God," [3]—no hope for the unbelieving. But I present to them "the hope set before us" in the gospel. I tell them, Christ Jesus died for sinners; for the chief of sinners. I assure them that "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." I put them in mind of the solemn oath of God, that he has no pleasure in their death; I put them in mind of the most condescending expostulation, "Why, why, will ye die?" I beseech them to despair of salvation in themselves; I assure them that

things he said to me was, "Sir, you have found me reading your countryman, Archibald M'Lean. He was a man mighty in the Scriptures, sir: mighty in the Scriptures."

[1] Isa viii. 13. Matt. x. 28. [2] Leighton.

[3] Isa. lvii. 21.

Jesus is "able to save them to the uttermost," and as willing as able.[1] Oh, if they would but believe "these true and faithful sayings of God," a hope that will never make them ashamed would spring up in their hearts; and, along with that fear of the Lord by which men depart from evil, a fear in which there is sweet awful pleasure, not torment, in delightful harmonious operation, would induce them, from "children of disobedience," to become children of obedience; and, instead of continuing to "fashion themselves according to their lusts in their ignorance," would lead them to "be holy in all manner of conversation."

III.—MOTIVES TO THE PERFORMANCE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

Let us now illustrate the motives to Christian duty, which are unfolded in the paragraph under consideration. These are four in number. (1.) The grandeur, excellence, and security of that inheritance, the full possession of which can be attained only in a course of christian duty: "Wherefore," says the apostle, referring to the whole of the preceding description of the final happiness which awaits Christians at the second coming of their Lord. (2.) The holiness of God: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." (3.) The equity of God: "The Father on whom ye call, or he whom ye call Father, judgeth every man according to his works." And, (4.) The provision made for sanctification, by the sacrifice of the Son of God: "Ye are redeemed, not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily, was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." Let me turn your attention to these powerful motives in their order.

§ 1.—*The grandeur, excellence, and security of the Christian salvation, a motive to Christian duty.*

The grandeur, excellence, and security of the inheritance, the full possession of which can be attained only in a course of christian duty, is a most powerful motive to obedience, and to the employment of all the means which are fitted to secure it. When the apostle says, "Wherefore," for these reasons, we naturally ask, for what reasons? and we readily find an answer. The preceding context is principally occupied with a description of the final happiness, the eternity of holy blessedness, which awaits the genuine followers of Jesus Christ in the last time, at the revelation of the Saviour.

Now, is not the attainment of this eternity of holy happiness well worthy of every exertion that man is capable of?—will it not infinitely more than compensate for privations however great, sacrifices however costly, sufferings however severe, that may be required in

[2] Rom. vi. 23. Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

pursuing it? When we look around us, and see "all things so full of labor, that man cannot utter it;" when we see men, in order to obtain some worldly advantage, the value of which is in a great measure imaginary, and the possession of which must be insecure and short-lived, rising early, sitting late, eating the bread of carefulness, compassing sea and land, straining to the utmost every faculty of exertion, and tasking to the utmost every power of endurance, we cannot help being painfully struck at the disproportion between the worthlessness of the object, and the multitude and mightiness of the means. It "resembles ocean into tempest tost, to waft a feather or to drown a fly." We feel disposed to ask the infatuated laborer, "Wilt thou set thine heart on things which are not?" "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"[1]

But there is no such disproportion here. "The crown of righteousness," "the crown of life," is an adequate reward for all the toils, and privations, and fatigues, and agonies, of the christian race and warfare; and all the sufferings of the present state, to which a Christian may be exposed in the cause of his religion, are not "worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;" the afflictions of the present state, however numerous and severe, are lighter than dust in the balance, when weighed against that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."[2]

Is not this calculated to arouse to active exertion, to prepare for patient suffering? Is it not most reasonable, that, in prosecuting such a pursuit, our determination to do nothing that can hazard failure, and everything that can promote success, should be most resolute, and that we should look away from everything, however otherwise attractive, which is calculated to divert our attention or divide our affections? Is not the attainment of such a blessing a fit object of hope? Is not the loss of such a blessing a fit object of fear?

But it may be said, Is not the "salvation which is in Christ, with eternal glory," "the gift of God," and is it not "sure to all the seed?" Is it not "laid up for *them* in heaven?" and are *they* not kept for it by the mighty power of God?[3] What need, then, of all this obedience and submission? What need of all this determined resolution, and self-denied moderation, and animating hope, and cautious fear? The answer to those questions is at hand, and it is brief and satisfactory. The final salvation is the gift of God, and the objects of his love shall, assuredly, not come short of it. But there is a divinely appointed method for obtaining that eternal life which is the gift of God; and none can enjoy the well-grounded hope of possessing it, who do not seek it in this divinely appointed method. Nothing is more distinctly stated in Scripture, than that it is only in the way of persevering faith and holiness that heaven is to be expected; and that, in the way of persevering faith and holiness, heaven cannot be too confidently expected. It is in the way of persevering faith and holiness alone that we can reach heaven. "We have need of patience," that is, we must persevere, "that, by the will of God, we may obtain the promised

[1] Prov. xxiii. 5. Isa. lv. 2.
[2] Rom. viii. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 17.
[3] Rom. vi. 23; iv. 16.

blessing." "Without holiness no man can see the Lord."[1] Unbelief and disobedience are the road to hell; and even a true Christian, when, under the influence of the evil heart of unbelief, he falls into backsliding, may be justly said to be on the road to hell, though blessed be God, it is certain he will never reach the termination of that road; for the prayer of his Redeemer, who is mighty, will prevent his faith from utterly failing, and his backslidings will be healed, and he will be made to retrace his steps, and walk onward in faith and holiness towards heaven.

Still it is a general truth which all should attend to, "He that lives after the flesh shall die." "He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." He that turns back, "turns back towards perdition."[2] On the other hand, nothing is more certain than that, in a persevering course of christian faith and obedience, the celestial blessedness in all its grandeur and excellence shall be realized. "He who, through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body, shall live." He who, "through a constant continuance in well-doing, seeks for glory, honor, and immortality, shall obtain eternal life." He who "endureth to the end, shall be saved." He who perseveres in believing, shall obtain "the salvation of the soul." He who "adds to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity;" he who doeth these things, "shall never fall, but thus an entrance shall be ministered to him abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."[3] The attainment of the celestial blessedness in this way, is not merely a high probability—even in this case the motive would be a powerful one—it is an absolute certainty. It is as secure as the word and oath, the perfections and being of God, can make it.

How well fitted are such considerations to repress weariness, to rekindle ardor in the christian race! "I run not as uncertainly," I keep along the marked race-course, and I am sure of "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." How admirably calculated to revive fainting courage in the christian conflict! "I fight not as one that beateth the air." I know that, "waxing valiant in fight, I shall put to flight all the armies of the aliens." "I know in whom I have believed."[4] Continuing to "fight the good fight of faith," I shall be "more than conqueror through him that loved me." The men of the world, in prosecution of their fancied good, spare no pains, shrink from no difficulty, decline no hazard, though they have nothing but probability, often a very weak probability, to excite and encourage them. How unnatural, how inexcusable, on the part of those professing to believe the gospel revelation, to be careless and inactive in the pursuit of a happiness which "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and which it hath never entered into the heart of man to conceive;" and of the attainment of which, in the appointed manner, we may be, we ought to be, as certain as we are of our own existence! Well might the apostle, when his mind was warmed and

[1] Heb. x. 36; xii. 14. [2] Rom. viii. 13. Gal. vi. 8. Heb. x. 39. Εἰς ἀπώλειαν.
[3] Rom. viii. 13; ii. 7. Matt. x. 22. Heb. x. 39. 2 Pet. i. 5–11.
[4] 1 Cor. ix. 36. Phil. iii. 14. 2 Tim. i. 12.

elevated by the contemplation of the glories of the final deliverance, say, "*Wherefore* gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end; and be obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; but be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

This is the effect which the believing contemplation of the heavenly blessedness is calculated and intended to have on the mind. It is not intended to afford an indolent delight, but a powerful excitement, and to induce Christians to be "steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as they know their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

§ 2.—*The holiness of God a motive to Christian duty.*

The second motive which the apostle presents to the mind as urging to christian obedience, is the holiness of the Divine Being—"Be holy in all manner of conversation, as he who has called you is holy; as it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

There is none holy as Jehovah. He is "glorious in holiness." "He" only "is holy"—"holy and reverend" is His name.[1] And those intelligent beings, who are capable of apprehending most of the perfections and beauties of his uncreated nature, have their attention chiefly fixed by this lovely attribute, and "day without night" hymn his praises as the "holy, holy, holy" One.[2] The holiness of God is just another word for the moral perfection of his nature. It is not something different from justice and benignity. It is the absolute perfection and the harmonious union of justice and benignity.

The sum of the Christian's duty is to be holy; that is, to be conformed to God; to have the same views, and judgments, and sentiments with him; to approve what he approves; to disapprove what he disapproves; and the strongest and best reason why the Christian should have these views, and judgments, and sentiments, and likings and dislikings, is just because God has them. The strongest and best reason why he should thus think and thus will, is just that God thus thinks and thus wills. To be holy, is to be conformed to God; and to be conformed to God, is at once man's highest honor, duty, and happiness; and what more cogent reason can be given for following any tenor of disposition and conduct than that it is "the whole of man,"[3] the whole of his honor, his duty, and his happiness?

The divine being is the most glorious and venerable being in the universe; and it is his holiness far more than his power or his wisdom, far more than his eternity or his immensity, or his immutability, that makes him so. His other perfections, separate from this, would make him an object of terror rather than of veneration. He is emphatically "glorious in holiness;" and it is this perfection which clothes all the others with moral attractive influence, and makes their possessor at once infinitely estimable and infinitely lovely. When an intelligent being bears no resemblance to God in moral excellence, there is in that being nothing really dignified and honorable; no

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 2. Exod. xv. 21. Psal. xcix. 5; cxi. 9. [2] Isa. vi 3.
[3] Eccles. xii. 13.

proper cause of moral respect or approbation; and just in the degree in which there is a resemblance, is that intelligent being a fit object of moral esteem; honorable and honored by God and all right-thinking angels and men. This, then, is one portion of the force of the motive, "Be holy, for I am holy." Be holy, for to be holy is to be conformed to God, and to be conformed to God is true honor.

But there is more in it than this. To be conformed to God is man's highest duty. To think in opposition to God, to will in opposition to God, must surely be the most unnatural and wicked of all things in beings capable of thinking and willing; and to think along with him, to will along with him, must, from the very nature of things, be their first and highest duty. To have the mind and will and active faculties in perfect accordance with the mind and will and command of God, is the clearest conception we can form of the moral perfection of an intelligent creature.

But even this is not all. To be conformed to God is man's truest, highest happiness. God is the happiest being in the universe, and the reason is, he is the holiest being in the universe. He is perfectly happy, for he is perfectly holy. Men cannot participate in the happiness of God, but by becoming "partakers of his holiness." God himself cannot make a being like man really, permanently happy, in any other way than by making him holy. "They who are far from him must perish;" and there is nothing so good for man in all the extent and emphasis of meaning, which belongs to the word "good," as the being "near to God."[1] The force of this motive, then, briefly expressed, is this: 'to perform christian duty, to be obedient children, is to be holy; and to be holy, is to be like God; and to be like God, is man's highest honor, duty, and happiness.' Surely he must be an obtuse-minded, he must be an obdurate-hearted man, who does not perceive, who does not feel, the overwhelming force of such a motive.

There is a superadded force in the motive, as urged in the passage before us. There is an additional power of persuasion in the descriptive appellation, by which, instead of one of his proper names, the Divine Being is in this passage spoken of: As "He that has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." When they were running the mad career of error and folly and sin, God's powerful voice reached their hearts, and "called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." 'When that Holy One called you, it was for a purpose consonant with his character. That calling was "a holy calling;" he called you, "not to uncleanness, but to holiness." He has chosen you, "that you might be holy, and without blame before him in love."'[2] To use the words of holy Leighton, "He hath severed you from the mass of the profane world, and picked you out to be jewels for himself; he hath set you apart for the end that you may be holy to him. It is sacrilege for you to dispose of yourselves after the impure manner of the world, and to apply to any profane use those whom God has consecrated to himself. He who hath called you is holy; and therefore, when he called you, it must have been that ye should be holy. Therefore 'Be ye holy.'"

[1] Psal. lxxiii. 27, 28. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 9. 2 Tim. i. 9. 1 Thess. iv. 7. Eph. i. 4.

§ 3.—*The strict equity of God a motive to Christian duty.*

The strict equity of God is the third motive brought forward by the apostle for urging Christians to obedience, and to the use of the means calculated to facilitate and secure obedience. "Be obedient children; fashion not yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; be holy in all manner of conversation; gird up the loins of your mind; be sober; hope to the end; pass the time of your sojourning here in fear;" "since the Father on whom ye call," or rather, "since He whom ye call Father, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work." [1]

The primary idea here plainly is, that the strict impartiality of God, as the moral governor of the world, should be felt as a powerful motive to christian duty. This consideration is urged as a motive to that holy fear, which we have seen to be one of the great means of christian obedience; but it is also a powerful, direct motive to christian duty in general.

God is the moral governor of the world. "The Lord hath prepared his throne for judgment, and he shall judge the world in righteousness." "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." Every human being is the subject of this government. All must stand before his tribunal. He judgeth every man, and every work of every man; "for God will bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." [2]

In the administration of this moral government, God is regulated by the principles of the strictest impartiality and righteousness. "He judgeth every man's work without respect of persons." "To have respect of persons" is a Hebrew mode of expression, descriptive of that most iniquitous and mischievous abuse of the judicial function, when accidental circumstances, not fixed principles, guide the decision; when men are rewarded or punished, not according to the desert of their conduct; when they gain or lose their cause, not according to its merits or demerits, but according to the personal partialities of the judge, from arbitrary caprice, or from his regard to the wealth, or rank, or power, or influence of the parties. The divine administration, from the absolute independence and moral perfection of the judge, is completely free from this fault. "The Lord your God," says Moses, "is a God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible one, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." "Let the fear of the Lord be upon you," says Jehoshaphat to the judges whom he had appointed; "for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." "Far be it from God," says Elihu, "that he should do wickedly; from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man will he render unto him, and cause him to receive according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. He accepteth not the persons of princes,

[1] "Particula *ει* non est conditionalis sed assertiva, non dubitantis, sed rem notam presupponentis—quia patrem invocatis."—CALVIN. Others render it "quandoquidem," or "quoniam."—HOTTINGER. ROSENMULLER.

[2] Psal. ix. 7; ciii. 19. Eccles. xi. 9.

nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands." "Of a truth," says Peter, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." "In the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment," says Paul, "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." "God," says he in another passage, "accepteth no man's person." "There is no respect of persons with him." [1]

This strict impartiality of the Divine Being, as the righteous judge, is a very powerful motive to the duties enjoined, whether the injunction be considered as addressed to *professed* Christians or to *real* Christians. Let us endeavor to unfold its force, as bearing respectively on these two classes.

Viewed as addressed to professors of Christianity, it is as if the apostle had said, 'A mere profession of Christianity will avail you nothing. It is to no purpose that you have been baptized in the name of Christ, that you have a place in his church, that you sit down at his table, that you perform the external acts of worship which he requires, if you are not "obedient children." If you are not "renewed in the spirit of your mind," if you are "not transformed by the renewing of your mind," so as not "to be conformed to the world," if you are not "holy in all manner of conversation," if you are not perseveringly active in the performance of Christian duty, if you are not moderate in all things, if you have not the hope of eternal life, and are not in the fear of the Lord all the day long, it is madness in you to think that you are in the way of obtaining "the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled." Remember with whom you have to do. He is not capable of being imposed upon by external appearances. He is not capable of being biased by weak partialities. He will judge you, and judge you according to your works. You will find that the principle on which his decisions go is the plain one: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous. He that doeth not righteousness is not righteous." You will find that within the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem there is room only for those who do his commandments; and that "without, in outer darkness," is the allotted everlasting habitation of "the hypocrite," as well as "the unbeliever," of the unprofitable and unfaithful servant. "Not every one that calleth Jesus Christ, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of his Father who is in heaven." ' [2]

The ultimate destiny of the worldly immoral professor of Christianity will be more dreadful than that of the heathen or the open

[1] Deut. x. 17. 2 Chron. xix. 7. Job xxxiv. 10–12, 19. Acts x. 34, 35. Rom. ii. 5–12. Gal. ii. 6. Eph. vi. 9. Col. iii. 25.

[2] 1 John iii. 7, 10. Matt. xxiv. 51; vii. 21.

infidel. Oh! that sinners in Zion were afraid. Oh! that fearfulness might surprise the hypocrites. The God, of whom you say that he is your God, is no respecter of persons; he will judge you according to your works. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for if ye sow to the flesh, of the flesh ye shall reap corruption; but if ye sow to the Spirit, ye shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."[1] "You profess the true religion, and call him Father; but if you live devoid of his fear, and be disobedient children, he will not spare you on account of that relation, but rather punish you more severely, because you pretend to be his children, and yet were not."[2] Beware of supposing that a life of irreligion and immorality, or even a life of indolence, or of worldliness, under a christian profession, can have any end but one—redoubled damnation. How can it be otherwise, if he with whom you have to do, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work? How fearful is the situation of that man who can hope for impunity and salvation, only if the righteous Lord shall cease to judge righteously! Such is the force of the motive viewed as addressed to professors of Christianity—who may be, many of whom are, false professors.

Let us now look at the motive as it bears on those who are really Christians. While "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," while "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory," is freely bestowed on, not purchased by, those who obtain it; yet it is plainly the doctrine of Scripture, as it appears to me, that the degrees of happiness in a future world will be proportioned to the degrees of holiness in the present world. In judging of the works of the redeemed, strict impartiality will be maintained. To use the figurative language of our Lord, one shall have authority over ten cities, and another shall have authority over five; or, to adopt the plainer terms of his apostle, "Let every man prove his own work, for every man must bear his own burden." The apostle, as a motive to christian duty, assures the Hebrews that "God is not unrighteous to forget the works of faith and labor of love of Christians;" and the righteous Judge, who will give the crown of righteousness to all who love his appearing, proclaims: "Behold! I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." When Christians stand before the judgment seat of Christ, they will "receive the things done in the body, according to what they have done." If any man's work, any christian man's, abides after the great trial which it must then undergo, he shall obtain a reward. If any man's work do not abide when tried, he shall suffer comparative loss, though he himself "be saved." There will be a difference, ay, and an important one, between those Christians who have added to their "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. vi. 7, 8. Rom. viii. 13. [2] Leighton.

knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; who have had these things in them, and so abounded in them, that they were neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and those who, though true Christians, have in consequence of indulged indolence and worldliness, done but little to honor their Lord and advance his cause. To the former, "an abundant entrance shall be ministered into the everlasting kingdom;" [1] they shall enter with full spread sail and with a favorable wind the harbor of eternal rest; while of the latter it may be said, that "some of them on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, escape safe to land." It is a general principle of the divine government, extending to other cases than that of ministers receiving a recompense according to their respective services to the church of God: "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor." [2]

In this point of light the force of the motive may be thus expressed: "Be holy,—for in proportion to your attainments in holiness here, will be your measure of enjoyment hereafter." Such seems to me the force of this motive, viewed as addressed respectively to professed Christians and to real Christians.

Like the preceding motive, this receives additional force from the peculiarity of the phraseology in which it is clothed. It is not, since God, or the righteous Judge; but it is, since "the Father on whom ye call"—or "He whom ye call Father—judgeth every man according to his work." If we consider the rendering given by our translators as the just one, then the force of the descriptive appellation in increasing the power of the motive, may be thus expressed: 'It is not wonderful that your heathen neighbors should be characterized by injustice and inhumanity; it is not wonderful that they should "fashion themselves according to their lusts in their ignorance." He whom they call on as father,—Jupiter, their father of gods and men,—is a being actuated by human passions, liable to human vices, arbitrary in his dealings, and capricious in his acquittals and condemnations, in his rewards and punishments. An unholy life is just what you might expect in them from the character of the object of their worship. But it should be otherwise with you. He on whom you call, whom you worship, is the Father—the Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Saviour of men. He is "holy in all his ways, and just in all his doings." How incongruous, then, were you not obedient and holy, would the character of the worshipper be with the character of the Deity!'

If we prefer the rendering, "since He whom ye call Father, judgeth every man according to his work," which we are rather disposed to do, then the manner in which the peculiar phraseology modifies the motive, may be thus unfolded: 'You stand in the relation of children to a father, to the great object of religious and moral duty. He has acknowledged you as his "children through faith in Christ Jesus,"

[1] 2 Pet. i. 11. Οὕτω πλουσίως ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται ὑμῖν ἡ εἴσοδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν.—I. X.
[2] Luke xix. 13. Gal. vi. 4, 5. Heb. vi. 10. Rev. xxii. 12. 2 Cor. v. 10. 1 Cor. iii. 13–15. Acts xxvii. 44. 1 Cor. iii. 8.

and you, by his Spirit sent forth into your hearts, have called him Father. May he not then say to you, "a son honoreth his father; if I be a Father, where is my honor" if ye are not children of obedience? Surely, if you have cried to him "my Father," you should permit him to be your guide. Surely, when you have called him Father, you should not turn away from him.[1]

And beware of presuming on this endearing relation, as if it would secure his winking at your negligence and disobedience. His very love as a father would prevent this; but this is not all. The kind Father is the righteous and impartial Judge. "He whom you call Father, without respect of persons judgeth every man's works." Again to quote Leighton: "The true Christian reasons thus, 'I will not sin, for my Father is the just Judge; but for my frailties I will hope for mercy, for the Judge is my Father.'"

§ 4.—*The provision made for sanctification in the sacrifice of Christ, a motive to Christian duty.*

The fourth motive urged by the apostle for the discharge of Christian duty, and the employment of the means calculated and intended to secure and facilitate its performance, is drawn from the wonderful plan which God has formed and executed for making men holy, even the death of his own Son as a sacrifice for sin. 'Be obedient children; fashion not yourselves according to your lusts in your ignorance; be holy in all manner of conversation; and in order to this, be resolutely determined, be moderate, hope to the end, and pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: "forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."'

In pressing home a motive adduced by an inspired writer, the christian expositor has two things to do: first, to exhibit distinctly the meaning of the statement made, and then to show how that statement is fitted to serve the purpose for which it is made. In a complicated sentence, like that which is now the subject of consideration, it is of importance clearly to apprehend what is the primary sentiment, and what are the secondary and subsidiary ideas which are introduced for the purpose of its more impressive exhibition. Happily in the case before us, the leading idea is so prominent as to be easily recognized. It is obviously this: 'Jesus Christ died as a sacrificial victim, in order that men might be made holy;' and the secondary and subservient ideas, all calculated to give additional force to this wonderful statement as a motive to christian duty, are the following: the intrinsic value of the sacrifice; its divine appointment; its having been actually offered; and the abundant evidence that it has not been offered in vain.

[1] Gal. iii. 26. Mal. i. 6. Jer. iii. 4, 19.

The primary idea is, Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for sin, in order to make men holy; the most animating of all encouragements, the most powerful of all motives to christian duty. Christ Jesus shed his blood as a sacrificial victim, to redeem or deliver men from "the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers."

"Conversation" here, as in a previous part of the paragraph, and as indeed in almost every place in the New Testament, signifies character and conduct, habitual temper and behavior. The expression, "conversation received by tradition from your fathers,"[1] has by many, by most, interpreters, been considered as referring principally, if not solely, to what may be called the hereditary Jewish religious and moral character and habits, the mode of thinking and feeling and acting formed in the natural mind under the influence of the peculiarities of the Jewish dispensation, and handed down from generation to generation. This appears to me to limit unduly the meaning of the very expressive phrase now before us. The "conversation" here mentioned is not anything peculiar to Jews, it is something common to man; it is the character and conduct formed by men "fashioning themselves according to their lusts in their ignorance;" the character and conduct which result from the influence of present things on the depraved principles of our fallen nature; what the apostle Paul calls "the flesh" and "the old man," in its members and operations, in his desires and deeds; the hereditary character of fallen man, received by tradition, handed down from father to son, from generation to generation. This conversation is termed "vain,"—foolish,[2] useless conversation. This conduct in some of its varieties, "has a show of wisdom," but in every case it is really foolish. They who are distinguished by it, even when they profess to be wise—boast of their wisdom, show themselves to be fools.[3] It serves no good purpose. It does not, it cannot, lead to solid satisfaction, to permanent happiness. It may well be asked, "what fruit had ye," what fruit can ye have, "in these things?"[4]

To be "redeemed" is to be delivered, and the word "redeem"[5] is employed rather than another, because the deliverance referred to is deliverance through the payment of a ransom. To be delivered from this character and conduct, this mode of thinking, feeling, and acting, which is natural, hereditary to fallen man, and which is foolish, because vain, is just to be delivered from depravity, to be made holy, to be "delivered from this present evil world," to be "redeemed from all iniquity," to be rescued from the slavery of sin.[6]

Having thus shortly illustrated what is peculiar or difficult in the phraseology, let us proceed with equal briefness to elucidate the statement, which plainly consists of two parts—Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for sin, and Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for sin to deliver men from depravity, to make them holy.

Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for sin. This is the only satisfactory account which can be given of that most wonderful of all events—the death, the violent death, the shameful, painful, accursed death of

[1] πατροπαράδοτον.

[2] ματαίας, vana vivendi ratio, quæ, ubi tempus præteriit, nil reliqui fructus habet.—BENGEL.

[3] Rom. i. 21. [4] Ibid. vi. 21. [5] ἐλυτρώθητε. [6] Gal. i. 4. Tit. ii. 14.

the innocent, the perfect, incarnate, only-begotten of God. This event would have been utterly inexplicable, had we not been informed in a plain, well-accredited divine revelation, that this immaculately holy, this absolutely perfect, this infinitely dignified person occupied, by divine appointment, and to gain the most important and otherwise unattainable objects in the moral government of the universe, the place of guilty men; and, occupying their place, met with their desert, did what they were bound to do, suffered what they deserved to suffer, did and suffered all that was necessary, in the estimation of infinite wisdom and righteousness, to lay a foundation for their pardon and salvation. "We all, like sheep, had gone astray; we had turned every one to his own way; and the Lord made to meet on *him*," as the destined victim, "the iniquities of us all." The consequence was, "exaction was made, and he became answerable." "It pleased the Lord to bruise him," instead of destroying us; and "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was on him, and by his stripes we are healed." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree," was "made sin in our room," died as "the just one, in the stead of the unjust," "redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse in our room." [1] The direct and primary end of this sacrifice, so far as man is concerned, was to effect a change in his relation to God—to lay a foundation for an alteration in our state—to secure pardon, and restoration to the enjoyment of the divine favor; but the ultimate and most important end of this sacrifice in reference to man was, through this change of relation to effect a change of disposition; through this alteration of state to secure a transformation of character.

This is the second part of the apostle's statement. When the blood of Christ was shed as a victim for sin, it was to deliver men from "the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers." Deliverance from depravity is an essential part, in some points of view the most important part, of the christian salvation; and deliverance from guilt, and that sacrifice which was necessary, and is sufficient, to secure deliverance from guilt, are the grand means of securing this deliverance from depravity. The connection of the atonement with sanctification is frequently stated in Scripture, and is one of the most peculiar and important principles of the christian faith. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from this present evil world." Christ "sanctified himself, devoted himself to suffer as a sacrificial victim, that his people might be sanctified through the truth." "When he died for all, all died in him; and he died for them, that they might not live to themselves, but to him who died and rose again." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse in our room, not only that the blessing of Abraham," —a full and free justification, "should come upon us Gentiles, but that we also might obtain the promised Spirit," the source of all true holiness, "by believing." [2]

[1] Isa. liii. 5, 6, 10. 1 Pet. ii. 24. 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Pet. iii. 18. Gal. iii. 13.
[2] Tit. ii. 13, 14. Gal. i. 4. John xvii. 19. Gal. iii. 13, 14. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

The manner in which the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, as the great sacrificial victim, secures the holiness of all who believe in him, may be stated in a few words, though fully and satisfactorily to illustrate it, would require more space than we can here devote to it.

The atonement, by making it consistent with the divine justice to confer spiritual blessings on sinners, removes out of the way of their sanctification obstacles otherwise unsurmountable; by procuring for the Saviour, as one part of the reward of his generous labors in the cause of God's glory, the power of dispensing divine influence, it secures what is at once absolutely necessary and completely sufficient for making men holy; and, finally, the statement of the truth about Christ, the Son of God, suffering and dying in the room of sinners, contained in the Scriptures, when understood and believed, is, under divine influence, the grand means of destroying in the sinner's mind that enmity against God which is the elementary principle of all depravity, and of kindling up in his heart the love of God, which is the elementary principle of all holiness; of delivering the man from the demoralizing influence of "the present evil world," "things seen and temporal," and bringing him under the sanctifying influence of "things unseen and eternal." This, then, is the apostle's statement, 'The blood of Christ has been shed to redeem you from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers. The Son of God has died as a sacrifice for sin, in order to secure your holiness.'

Surely it does not require many words to show that this is a motive, an all-powerful motive, to the Christian to avoid sin, and practise duty. Has deliverance from depravity been secured at such a cost, and shall I pour contempt on the divine generosity? Shall I counteract the great design of the death of Christ? Though he shed his blood that I might be redeemed from my vain conversation, shall I still fashion myself according to my former lusts in my ignorance? Shall I still hug the chains, to break asunder which the Lord of glory toiled, and bled, and died? How can I, in whose room Christ died for sin—how can I any longer live in sin? Reckoning myself as, if I believe the truth I well may, to have died by sin in Christ Jesus, and to be alive in Christ Jesus by God, surely it is the most unnatural and incongruous of all things in me to allow sin to "reign in my mortal body, so that I should obey it by its desires."[1] Surely I should not "yield my members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but I should yield myself to God, as one alive from the dead, and my members to Him as instruments of righteousness;" surely I should be a child of obedience, surely I should "be holy in all manner of conversation."[2] To use the words of Archbishop Leighton: "This is an answer for all the enticements of sin and of the world,—'Except you can offer my soul something beyond the price that was given for it on the cross, I cannot hearken to you. Far be it from me that I should prefer a base lust, or anything in this world, or it all, to him who gave himself to death for me, and paid my ransom with his blood. His matchless love has freed me from the miserable captivity of sin, and hath forever fastened me to the sweet yoke of obedience. Let

[1] Rom. vi. 8–13. 1 Pet. iv. 1–6.

[2] Rom. vi. 8–13. 1 Peter iv. 1–6.

him alone to dwell and rule in me, and let him never go forth from my heart, who, for my sake, refused to come down from the cross.'"

The motive, even when presented in this simple, unadorned form, is surely one of transcendant power; but it derives additional force from the circumstances with which the inspired writer, with obvious intention, surrounds it in the passage before us. He fixes our mind on a variety of circumstances respecting that sacrifice for sin, by means of which we are emancipated from depravity, all of which are plainly calculated to make the consideration that such a sacrifice had been offered for such a purpose, tell more powerfully on the understanding, on the conscience, and on the heart.

And, first, there is the intrinsic worth of the sacrifice. This is brought before the mind in two ways. It was "not silver and gold, those corruptible things;" it was "the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The value of what was given to secure our emancipation from depravity, cannot be estimated by any created mind. All the gold and silver in the world, the universe of created things, are as nothing and vanity, when compared to the life-blood of the only begotten of God. The blessing to be obtained was too valuable to be procured by such means. "It could not be gotten for gold, neither could silver be weighed for the price thereof. It could not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal could not equal it; and the exchange of it could not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention need be made of coral, or of pearls; for the price of it was above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia could not equal it, neither could it be valued with pure gold."[1] What must be the value of holiness, when, to secure it, such a price was paid; and what must be the folly of him who contemns so valuable a possession, secured to him at so inestimable a cost!

A second way in which the value of the sacrifice is brought before the mind, is by describing it "as the sacrifice of a lamb without blemish and without spot."[2] In plain language, it was an all-perfect sacrifice. The death of Jesus Christ, viewed as the crowning act of a course of perfect obedience to the precept, and of perfect submission to the sanction, of the divine law, on the part of the most exalted being, both as to essential dignity and moral worth, "magnifies the law and makes it honorable," in a degree which the perfect obedience of a universe of unerring creatures, or the everlasting torments of a universe of sinning creatures, could not have done; and sweeps away, as with the force of ocean bursting from her bed, all the obstructions which human guilt had placed in the way of human holiness. And shall I, in opposing the ultimate design of this all-perfect sacrifice in reference to myself, show my contempt of it?

The second circumstance respecting this sacrifice, the grand means of holiness, which the apostle notices, is, that it was the subject of divine appointment; Jesus, as the victim for the sins of men, and thus the author of holiness to men, was "fore-ordained before the

[1] Job xxviii. 15, &c.

[2] Ἀμώμου. Jesus Christus *in se* non habuit labem. Ἀσπίλου, neque *extrinsecus* maculam contraxit.—BENGEL.

foundation of the world." He was a voluntary, but not self-appointed victim. He was "set forth,"[1]—fore-appointed "a propitiation in his blood." When "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together against God's holy child Jesus, they but did what his hand and counsel had before determined to be done." He was "set up from everlasting."[2] And shall we, by disregarding or counteracting the design of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin, to secure holiness, show that we lightly esteem what has employed the thoughts of the uncreated mind from all eternity?

The third circumstance noticed by the apostle is, that this sacrifice has been actually offered. This wondrous scheme is not now mere plan. The spotless, inestimable price has been paid; the amazing expiation has been made; the Lamb of God has been manifested in these last times, bearing, and bearing away, the sins of the world. And shall all this have been done in vain, so far as we are concerned? for it is done in vain if we continue still in our sins.

The fourth and last circumstance noticed by the apostle, respecting the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, designed for securing holiness to man, calculated to increase its efficacy as a motive to avoid sin and perform duty, is the abundant evidence that it has answered the purpose for which it was intended. The sacrifice has been offered, and it has not been offered in vain. Had not the death of Christ served its purpose, it could not have been followed by his resurrection. If he had not risen again, then would we have had reason to conclude, "we are yet in our sins," guilt is unexpiated, and the fetters of depravity are unbroken. But we have abundant ground for concluding that "Messiah cut off, but not for himself," has "finished transgression, made an end of sin." If he died "for our offences," he has been "raised again for our justification."[3] "God has raised him from the dead, and given him glory." "It is finished," said the dying Saviour on the cross; and from the throne of his glory, when he broke the bands of death, the Father responded, It is finished. In the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, we have a sure foundation laid for our "faith and hope in God," as "the God of peace," the pacified divinity, "who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."[4] In this we have a proof that he is well pleased with Christ, well pleased with sinners in Christ, and disposed, as "the God of peace, to sanctify them wholly, and preserve their whole spirit, soul and body, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."[5] And shall we, notwithstanding these proofs of God's approbation of the sacrifice of his Son—shall we, by not improving it for the purpose of our own sanctification, treat this "blood of the covenant, by which alone men can be sanctified, as if it were a common thing," destitute of all power to "purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"[6]

Rom. iii. 25. Προέθετο.—There is no doubt of the fact; but it may be doubted whether προέθετο refers to appointment or to exhibition.

[2] Acts iv. 27, 28. Prov. viii. 23.

[3] Dan. ix. Rom. iv. 25.

[4] Heb. xiii. 20.

[5] 1 Thess. v. 23.

[6] Heb. x. 29. Ἐν ᾧ ἡγιάσθη. Heb. ix. 14.

Such, then, is the Christian's duty, such are the means of performing it, and such are the motives to its performance.

The whole of this discourse has been practical, and stands little in need of what is ordinarily termed application or improvement. May the Holy Spirit give efficacy to the word of his grace, and may we all learn habitually, through the truth by the Spirit, to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God;" "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this world; and looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works!"[1]

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 1. Titus ii. 12–14.

DISCOURSE VI.

CHRISTIAN BROTHERLY LOVE, ILLUSTRATED AND RECOMMENDED.

1 Pet. i. 22–25.—Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

The sentence now read as the theme of discourse, though long and somewhat complicated, will be found, when carefully examined, to be entirely occupied with one subject,—the great Christian duty of brotherly love. That duty is at once explicitly enjoined, and powerfully recommended. The injunction is contained in these words, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." The motives by which compliance with this injunction is enforced, are brought forward in the clauses which precede and follow this injunction: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren," and "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

The duty enjoined, then, and the motives which urge to its performance, are the two great topics to which our attention must be successively directed in the illustration of this passage. The duty is brought before our minds in its nature,—mutual love, "love one another," "the love of the brethren;" and in two of its distinctive characters,—love "with a pure heart," "fervent love." The motives to the cultivation and expression of this christian affection are two, which we shall find it convenient to consider in an order the reverse of that in which they are stated in the text. *First*, Christians are distinguished by a mutual relation extremely intimate and altogether indissoluble. By their "being born again," they are all of them "the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus," and therefore brethren; and the tie of that brotherhood is not, like that of all natural relations, liable to dissolution, its bond being the infallibly true word of the ever-living, immutable God, lodged, by being understood and believed, in the mind of immortal man, v. 23. And, *secondly*, Chris-

tians are possessed of a common character corresponding to this relation, to which they have been formed by the Holy Spirit, through the operation of truth believed under his influence, v. 22. This mutual relation, and this common character, equally call on Christians to cultivate and exercise brotherly love. Such, then, is the outline of thought which I shall endeavor to fill up in the remaining part of the discourse.

I.—BROTHERLY LOVE ILLUSTRATED.

§ 1.—*The objects and elements of this love.*

The duty enjoined is LOVE. There is a love which every man owes to every other man, without reference to his spiritual state or character, merely because he is a man,—a sincere desire to promote his true welfare. This is the love which the apostle, with obvious propriety, represents as "the fulfilling of the law," [1] so far as it refers to our duties to our fellow-men; for he who is under its influence can "do no ill" to any man; he cannot intentionally injure his person, property, or reputation; but, on the contrary, must, "as he has opportunity, do good to all men." Good will is the essence, the sole component element, of this love. The love enjoined in our text is obviously much more limited in its range, and much more comprehensive in its elementary principles.

(1.) It is called "the love of the brethren," "brotherly kindness," as contradistinguished from that "charity" which has for its object the whole race of man; who, though all brethren, inasmuch as "they have one Father, one God has created them," are not all brethren in the sense in which this appellation is here used. This appellation is limited to what was then, to what is still, a comparatively small class of mankind,—genuine Christians. It can be exercised only by them; it can be exercised only to them. A man who is *un*christian, who is *anti*christian in his opinions and temper and conduct, may highly esteem, may tenderly love, a true Christian, but he cannot cherish towards him "brotherly kindness;" he loves him not because, but notwithstanding, he is a Christian. A christian man may, he does, cordially love all mankind; he desires the happiness of every being capable of happiness; he esteems what is estimable; he loves what is amiable; he admires what is admirable; he pities what is suffering, wherever he meets with it; but he cannot regard with "brotherly kindness" any one but a christian brother. None but a Christian can either be the object or the subject of this benevolent affection. None but a Christian can either be the agent or the recipient of the kind offices in which it finds expression.

This limitation is a matter, not of choice, but of necessity. Most gladly would the Christian regard all his fellow-men as fellow-Christians, if they would put it in his power, by becoming Christians; but till they do so, it is, in the nature of things, impossible that he should feel towards them as if they were what they are not. This affection originates in the possession of a peculiar mode of thinking and feel-

[1] Rom. xiii. 8–10.

ing produced in the mind by the Holy Spirit, through the knowledge and belief of christian truth, which naturally leads those who are thus distinguished to a sympathy of mind and feeling, of thought and affection, with all who, under the same influence, have been led to entertain the same views, and to cherish the same dispositions. They love one another "in the truth; for the truth's sake, that dwelleth in them, and shall be with them forever." [1]

(2.) This circumstance, which necessarily limits this principle as to its range, gives it greater comprehension of elementary principles, and greater intensity of influence and activity of operation. It includes good will in its highest degree; but to this it adds moral esteem, complacential delight, tender sympathy. This it does in every instance; but the degree, in which these elementary principles are to be found in individual cases of christian brotherly kindness, depends on a variety of circumstances, and chiefly on the approach that is made to completeness and perfection in the christian character, on the part of him who exercises it, and of him towards whom it is exercised. Every Christian loves every other Christian when he knows him; but the more accomplished the Christian is, whether the subject or object of christian love, the more does he put forth, or draw forth, its holy, benignant influence.

The end of all love is the good or the happiness of its object, as that happiness is conceived of by its subject. The great end which christian brotherly love contemplates, is the happiness of its object, viewed as a christian man; his deliverance from ignorance and error and sin, in all their forms and in all their degrees; his progressive, and ultimately his complete happiness, in entire conformity to the mind and will of God; the unclouded sense of the divine favor, the uninterrupted enjoyment of the divine fellowship, the being like the ever-blessed "holy, holy, holy One." It does not overlook any of the interests of its object, but it views them all in reference, in subordination, to the enjoyment of "the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory." Such is the general nature of the brotherly love here enjoined.

§ 2.—*The distinctive characters of christian love.*

Let us now look a little at the characters by which it is required to be distinguished. (1.) Christians are required to love one another "with a pure heart." The leading idea here has generally been supposed to be genuineness—sincerity. It must be real love, not affected or put on. It must be what the apostle Paul calls, "love without dissimulation;" [2] what the apostle John calls, "loving not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." [3] It is an affection, of which the internal feeling and practical effects fully correspond to, rather outrun than fall short of, the verbal expression. While the "law of kindness is on the lips," kindness itself is in the heart, and the fruits of kindness, substantial benefits, make their appearance in the conduct.

But while there can be no doubt that hypocrisy is one species of "filthiness of the spirit," of the impurity of the heart, it is not the

[1] 2 John 2. [2] Rom. xii. 9. [3] 1 John iii. 18.

only species which opposes the exercise of christian love. The "pure heart" includes more than sincerity; it includes freedom from all low, selfish motives and ends. "Love with a pure heart" signifies the benevolent affection that naturally flows from a sanctified heart, and which can issue from no other fountain; which loves chiefly for such causes as can excite affection only in a sanctified heart; and which seeks for its objects such happiness as only a sanctified heart can desire; and which seeks it by means which only a sanctified heart can dispose, or enable, a man to employ.

(2.) But Christians are required to "love one another," not only "with a pure heart," but "fervently." The term rendered "fervently" is a very expressive one, and I do not know any one English word which fully brings out its meaning.[1] It conveys the idea of constancy. It is the word used in the Acts of the Apostles, where it is said—Prayer was made by the church for Peter when in prison, "without ceasing."[2] Brotherly kindness must be constant, not fitful. Its causes are permanent and constant in their operation, and so should it be. It should be such love as will prevent "weariness in well-doing." A christian brother, when he acts like himself, "loves at all times." No change of circumstances, especially to the worse, on the part of its object, should affect it except in the way of increasing it.

But besides the idea of constancy, the word conveys the idea of intensity and power. It is the term employed where it is said that our Lord, "being in an agony, prayed more EARNESTLY."[3] Our christian love should be strong as well as genuine, such as slight causes shall not be able to destroy, or even materially to affect, and such as shall be capable of producing great effects, making us willing to make strenuous exertions and costly sacrifices for its objects, when these are necessary to gain its ends. It should be so fervent as that "many waters" of neglect, infirmities, offences, petty injuries, "shall not quench it," or even damp its ardor. It has been happily, though in homely phrase, said, "It should be like the sacred fire which descended on Elijah's sacrifice, which licked up the water and mud in the surrounding ditch; it should absorb a whole trenchful of such stuff, and still retain strength enough to send up to heaven the grateful fumes of the sacrifices with which God is well pleased." And it should manifest its strength, not merely by overcoming opposing obstacles, but by making exertions and sacrifices. It should be such as would lead us even "to lay down our lives for the brethren,"[4] if so costly a sacrifice were required of us.

This love is to be manifested in choosing for our friends and associates our christian brethren, joining ourselves to the brotherhood, casting in our lot with them, "walking with them in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless," sympathizing with them in their griefs, rejoicing with them in their joys, communicating to them in their necessities, assisting them in their labors, bearing with their infirmities, ay, bearing their infirmities; admonishing them, and reproving them, it may be sharply, when they are to be blamed, yet all in kindness, loving them too well to suffer sin upon

[1] Ἐκτενῶς. [2] Acts xii. 5. [3] Luke xxii. 44. [4] 1 John iii. 16.

them; delighting in their christian attainments and triumphs as if they were our own; never being ashamed of them, however low their place in society, and however frowned on and persecuted by the world—never "ashamed to call them brethren."

And it must manifest itself not only in what we do, but in the manner in which we do it. To relieving a poor brother, it should not be necessary that he implore our help. If "we see him have need," that should be enough to secure our assistance. We should be "GIVEN," disposed, "to hospitality;" "READY to distribute;" "WILLING," inclined, "to communicate." Instead of waiting for the call of a distressed brother, we should run to his help. We should feel one another's crosses, bear one another's burdens, allay the sorrows, supply the wants, sympathize with the wrongs, espouse the cause, protect the persons, and relieve the necessities, of our brethren in Christ.

(3.) There is one character which it is of peculiar importance that our mutual affection as Christians should be distinguished by. It should be love like Christ's. "Little children," said he who "is not ashamed to call us brethren,"—"Little children, a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye likewise should love one another."[1] And how did he love his people? His love was free and ready, considerate and wise, laborious and expensive, generous and self-sacrificing; looking to all their interests, but chiefly to their highest interests; not forgetting that they had bodies, but chiefly concerned about their souls: and such should be our brotherly love. He took an interest in everything that concerned them; he instructed, and counselled, and comforted them; he prayed with them, and for them; he vindicated them when they were accused; apologized for them when their conduct admitted of apology; reproved them, but in love, when they deserved it; bore with their infirmities; made much of what was good in them, and publicly owned them to be dearer to him than brother, sister, or mother: and thus should we manifest our love to the brethren.[2]

Like all the commands of our divine Lord, this injunction is characterized by benignant wisdom. It is by loving one another that the highest interest of the whole christian family is promoted. Everything thus becomes common property. I have the advantage of all that any of my christian brethren possesses. Under the influence of this principle, the wise direct the strong, and the strong protect the wise; the zealous stimulate the considerate, and the considerate restrain the zealous. The means of promoting holy happiness are thus prodigiously enlarged, every one employing his peculiar gift and opportunities for the good of every other, and thus advancing the common benefit of all. Thus it is that Christians (ἀληθεύοντες), "sincere, truthful in love, grow up into all things to him who is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."[3]

(4.) This love is obviously not to be confined—when it is en-

[1] John xiii. 34. [2] Henry *in loc.* [3] Eph. iv. 15, 16.

lightened and genuine it cannot be confined—within the pale of any particular sect or denomination of Christians. The members of individual churches, and of bodies of associated churches, have, no doubt, opportunities of cultivating this affection towards each other which they do not enjoy in an equal degree in reference to Christians of equal, it may be of higher, spiritual excellence, with whom they have not the same means of becoming acquainted. But wherever I recognize the character, I should cherish and manifest the love, of a brother. These are well-considered words of the compilers of the Westminster Confession: "All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, being united to one another in love, have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. Saints by profession are bound to entertain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification, as also in relieving each other in outward things according to their several abilities and necessities, which communion, as God offereth opportunity, should be extended to 'all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus.'" [1]

"There is something inexpressibly awful"—I use the words of "a brother beloved"—"to a believer's mind, in the idea that his christian affection should be confined within narrower limits than the love of Jesus; that he should harbor in his heart any feeling inconsistent with love towards one whom Christ died to redeem; that any should be excluded from his prayer for the household of faith that have a part in the Saviour's intercession. Pitiably dreary must be the mind of that man who can look around on the wide world, and count his dozen or his score whom alone he can salute as brethren, or expect to accompany to heaven. Far from me, and from you, my christian friends, be such self-sufficient bigotry, which freezes the fountain of love, and keeps the heart cold under the melting beams of 'the Sun of righteousness.'" [2]

To the cultivation and exercise of this love, the fundamental requisite is, the being a genuine Christian. The love of God is the elementary principle of the believer's character: as no man loves him who begat, who does not love them who are begotten of him; so no man can love those who are begotten, who does not love him who begat them. We must love God, in order to our loving his children. We must be in the family, in order to our having the family spirit. No man who has not been born of God can love those who are born of him, as His children; and all who are "born of God" are "taught of God to love one another." [3] It is a divinely implanted instinct, as well as a divinely commanded duty.

But this gift needs to be stirred up; and the two grand means of stimulating it are, under divine influence, first, the cultivation of an intimate acquaintance, the maintenance of a holy fellowship, with our christian brethren,—we cannot love those whom we do not know, for it is the manifestations of the character of our common Lord, which

[1] Westminster Conf. xxvi. 1, 2.
[2] Wardlaw.
[3] 1 Thess. iv. 9. Θεοδίδακτοι.

our brethren, who have contemplated him "with open face," like so many mirrors, make, that endear them to us, and draw out our affection to them; and second, the keeping habitually before the mind the truths stated in the divine word respecting the spiritual relation and character of the objects of our christian affection, which are calculated to excite and strengthen it.

In the passage before us, the apostle employs the latter of these means for urging on those to whom he was writing, the duty of christian love. He brings before their minds the intimate mutual relation, and the common spiritual character, of true Christians. The consideration of these, as motives to christian brotherly love, shall form the second part of the discourse.

II.—BROTHERLY LOVE RECOMMENDED.

In the words of the first part of the twenty-second verse, and in the twenty-third, twenty-fourth, and twenty-fifth verses, the motives to christian brotherly love are urged. Though the motive from common character, in this passage, precedes that drawn from mutual relation, yet, as relation is the basis of character, we apprehend some advantages may be derived from reversing the order. In the sequel, then, I shall shortly illustrate these two remarks:—The intimate and indissoluble mutual relation among Christians, as brethren, arising out of their common, spiritual, and indissoluble relation to God as their Father, is a strong motive to the cultivation and display of brotherly kindness;—and the common character to which they have been all formed by the agency of the same Spirit, and the instrumentality of the same truth, is another powerful motive to cherish and exercise this christian grace. Let us illustrate these two principles, or rather let us attend to the apostle's illustration of them.

§ 1.—*The mutual relation of Christians a motive to brotherly love.*

The intimate and indissoluble mutual relation between Christians as brethren, arising out of their intimate and indissoluble common relation to God as their Father, is a strong motive to the cultivation and exercise of christian brotherly kindness. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being"—since ye are—all of you —"born again," become the children of God by a new, a spiritual, a heavenly birth,[1] "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

These words were originally addressed to churches, most of the members of which were converted Jews. These had, by their first and natural birth, been related mutually as members of the external holy family, by their common relation to Jehovah, the God of Israel,

[1] "Nova cognatio novum desiderat affectum."—ERASMUS.

through the link of their natural descent from Abraham. That relation, however, as belonging to the "flesh," to things seen and temporal, was liable to dissolution;—in the case of the individual at death; in the case of the nation when the new and better economy was introduced, when the substance took the place of the shadow, and the spirit of the letter. They had now, by a spiritual change termed the new or second birth, become mutually related as brethren, by becoming in common related to God as their spiritual Father. This relation was far superior to the former. It bound them together as spiritual beings to God, as "the Father of their spirits;" and it was effected in a manner corresponding to its nature. It was formed by truth being introduced into their minds—"by the word of God," "the word preached in the Gospel," being understood and believed by them.[1] They were all ONE, inasmuch as they were "all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus."[2] That faith bound them to God, and to one another, and formed a bond suited to their natures as rational beings.

The intimate relation thus formed was a permanent one. The seed was "incorruptible." The phrase, the "word of God," is explanatory of the figurative expression—"the seed not corruptible, but incorruptible." The words, "which liveth and abideth forever," viewed by themselves, might refer to God, who alone hath immortality, who is the living One, inhabiting eternity; but when, in the passage quoted from the prophet Isaiah,[3] apparently for the purpose of illustrating this phrase, we find the terms, "the word of the Lord endureth forever," we cannot doubt that the epithets, "living and abiding forever," are intended to be descriptive of "the word of the Lord," the grand link of the common connection of Christians with their heavenly Father, and of their mutual relation to each other.

That word is eternal truth. That truth introduced into the heart through divine influence, by being understood and believed, becomes a "living," active, operative principle there, producing holiness and joy. And it "abideth forever:" it dwells an ever-living principle in an indestructible shrine—the never-dying human spirit; and dwelling forever there, in the case of all the holy family it forms an everlasting link of connection with their common Father, and with each other.

This relation far surpasses all other relations. There is no brotherhood like this, none so intimate, none so lasting. The relation of a Jew to a fellow Jew was very intimate. It was the relation of man to man, of kinsman to kinsman, of common heirs of the privileges of the first covenant to one another; but that relation, fruitful as it was of advantages (for the Jew, during the preparatory economy, had much and manifold advantage),[4] had the taint of mortality. It belonged to the "flesh," to what was carnal and outward, not to what was spiritual and inward. It was perishable. But this relation, as it is spiritual in its nature, is unending in its duration. Till mind ceases to be mind, truth to be truth, God to be God, it must continue, bind-

[1] Few things could more strikingly show the power of preconceived opinion to produce misinterpretation than the fact, that "the Word" has been here explained of the personal word, to support a particular metaphysical theory respecting the nature of regeneration.
[2] Gal. iii. 26. [3] Isaiah xl. 6, 7. [4] Rom. iii. 1, 2; ix. 4, 5.

ing believers in a holy, happy relation to God as their Father, and to one another as brethren, to all eternity. Was it not reasonable and right, then, that *they* should "love one another with a pure heart fervently?" If he is rightly considered as a monster who refuses to cherish and manifest peculiar regard to those who are connected with him by the ties of a natural relationship, which may in a moment, which must in a few years, be dissolved forever, what name is to be given to a man calling himself a Christian, who does not regard and treat as brethren those who, if his profession be a sincere one, stand to him in a relation, of the intimacy of which the nearest earthly relation is but a feeble figure, and the duration of which can be measured only by the years of the Eternal?

§ 2.—*The common character of Chistians a motive to brotherly love.*

The common character to which all Christians have been formed by the agency of the same Spirit, and the instrumentality of the same word, is a strong motive to the cultivation and exercise of christian brotherly kindness: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit to the unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." The force of this motive is, Ye are now in a *moral capacity* for loving the brethren constantly and fervently; exert and manifest your moral power.

It was once otherwise. The unpurified soul, overrun with the loathsome leprosy of ungodliness, worldliness, selfishness, and malignity, was morally incapable of the healthy functions of its affectionate nature. It could not love Christ, Christianity, or Christians. But "old things are passed away;" there has been a radical cure effected; divine truth, under divine influence, has put forth its healing power over the diseased mind; the moral capacity of loving what is really lovely, has been called into being;—and now what remains but that it should be improved by being exercised?

The human heart is naturally a very impure place. It is "a habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, the cage of every unclean and hateful bird." "He who searcheth the heart," and is "the true and faithful witness," declares, that "out of it proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, and false witness." [1] Everything that defiles the man originates there.

While the heart remains unpurified, the love of Christians, as Christians, cannot dwell there. There is no harmony, there is direct powerful antagonism, between the modes of thinking and feeling which characterize the natural, the unrenewed,—and the spiritual, the renewed, the christian mind. But in the case of those whom the apostle was addressing, this impurity of soul was cleansed. "They had purified their souls in obeying the truth."

"The truth" is the revelation of the character of God, the great reality, in the person and work of his Son, contained in the gospel; "the word of the truth of the gospel," a well-accredited declaration of the mind and will of Him who cannot be deceived, and who can-

[1] Matt. xv. 19.

not deceive; the very truth most sure. To obey that truth is to yield to its influence, and that, from the constitution of man, can be done only by understanding and believing it. He who refuses to attend to, to consider, to believe, the truth, rebels against it—cannot submit to its influence. He, on the other hand, who attends to, considers, and believes it, cannot but yield to its influence.

The persons referred to had believed the gospel. They had received the grace of God not in vain, and they had done this "by the Spirit;" that is, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who fixes the mind on the truth and its evidence, so as to lead to the belief of the truth. It is the man in the exercise of his rational faculties who believes; but he exercises these faculties under a divine influence. It is the man, not the Holy Spirit, who believes; but the man who believes, acts as he is influenced by the Holy Ghost.

The consequence of this faith, produced by divine influence, is such a purification of the soul as leads to the "unfeigned love of the brethren." "Ye have purified your souls to the unfeigned love of the brethren;" that is, 'Ye have so purified your souls, as that ye have now an unfeigned love of the brethren.' While the soul remains unpurified, if love to the brethren be expressed, it must be feigned, hypocritical; but when the soul is purified, the love of the brethren is a natural, spontaneous feeling. In the degree in which the truth is obeyed, the soul is purified; and in the degree in which the soul is purified, the brethren are loved.

Now, says the apostle, the Holy Spirit, through the faith of the truth, has bestowed on you the good gift of the love of the brethren. "Neglect not the gift that is in you." Cultivate the lovely plant. "Quench not the Spirit."[1] "Grieve not the Spirit."[2] Allow the truth, under his influence, "to dwell in you richly," "to reign in your minds and hearts," and fill them to an overflow with the love of the brethren.

A question naturally rises out of these discussions, which well deserves the serious consideration of each of us. Do we love the brethren with a pure heart fervently? Do we love the brethren *as* brethren? Do we love Christians *as* Christians? Do we love them on account of their relation to God and Christ, on account of their attachment to both, and on account of their resemblance to both? Do we cordially esteem them? Do we affectionately love them? Is our "delight" in them, as "the excellent ones of the earth?"[3] as the Psalmist phrases it. Have we complacency in them? Do we make them "the men of our counsel?" Have we pleasure in their society, and are we endeavoring, by every means in our power, to promote their welfare? If we can answer these questions in the affirmative, the apostle John authorizes us to consider this as evidence of our having undergone a saving change of character. Hereby do "we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."[4] Happy are we, if we indeed habitually cherish this holy affection; but let us remember, that it is at once our duty and

[1] 1 Thess. v. 19.
[2] Eph. iv. 30.
[3] Psal. xvi. 3.
[4] 1 John iii. 14.

our interest to abound in this affection and its fruits more and more. Let us remember, that the love of the brethren is the evidence that "we are in the light," and the continuance of it is the evidence that we are "abiding in the light"—that we are continuing to believe the truth, and are "rooted, grounded, and built up" in it.

Let us manifest our love in deeds of christian kindness, and remember that that only is the love of the brethren, which is "not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth." Let us show our love by "walking in all lowliness, esteeming each other better than ourselves; forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; putting away all bitterness, and anger, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking; being kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Let us put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering; and, above all, let us put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Let us "do good, and communicate," especially to the household of faith. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, let us not be content with saying, Depart in peace, be ye fed, be ye clothed; but let us give them the things which are needful for the body: for whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth either the love of God, or of the brethren, in him?"[1]

If we would have this affection, so closely connecting us with God, for "he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," and never are we surer of having "our fellowship truly with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ," than when we love the brethren—if we would have this godlike affection strong within us, constantly, powerfully operative, we must continue "purifying our souls by obeying the truth by the Spirit." "Whence come wars and fightings among Christians? Come they not from hence, even of our lusts which war in our members?"[2] And how are these selfish desires to be mortified, weakened, destroyed, but by the growing faith and influence of the truth as it is in Jesus? If we would have our hearts warm with the love of the saints, we must seek to have them warm with the love of the Saviour; and if we would have our hearts warmed with his love, we must keep near him, in the believing study of his word, and in affectionate intercourse with him, in all the offices of Christian devotion. "Let us then abide in *Him*," and he will abide in *us;* and thus shall we "bring forth much fruit"[3] in works and labors of love. The mind that was in him will thus be in us; we shall be "in the world as He was in the world," and "walk as he also walked." May He whose name and nature is love, bind us as a Christian church more and more in the bonds of a sincere, enlightened, holy love; and, as "the God of patience and consolation, grant us to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that we may walk together in love, even as Christ has loved us; that we with one mind and one mouth may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"[4]

[1] Eph. iv. 2, 3, 31. Col. iii. 14. Heb. xiii. 16. James ii. 15, 16. 1 John iii. 17.
[2] James iv. 1. [3] John xv. 4. [4] Rom. xv. 5, 6.

If there be in this audience—as I know there may be—as I fear there are—some, whether with or without a profession of religion, whose hearts tell them that they do not love the brethren, that they have no complacency in christian excellence, no relish for christian society, I affectionately beseech them to consider what awfully important facts are necessarily connected with that fact, to which their consciences now give testimony—that they do not love the brethren. It is a proof, my friends, that you have "not passed from death to life;" that you have no part nor lot as yet in the christian salvation; that you do not love God, that you do not love Christ; that you are not God's children, not Christ's brethren; that you are utterly unfit for heaven, where none of the human race but *the brethren* dwell. You have no relish for their society here, you would have still less there; for the peculiarities of character which make them disagreeable to you on earth, will be greatly heightened in heaven. What a deplorable state is that man in, who, even if he could get into heaven, the abode of perfect happiness, the only place where happiness is to be found at all, could not be happy!

But into heaven, continuing unprepared, you cannot be admitted. If you do not love Christians, you do not love Christ; and "if any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, he will be anathema maranatha,"[1] accursed at his coming. Oh, my friends, "you must be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even the word of God, which liveth and endureth forever," else "you cannot enter into the kingdom of God." You must "purify your souls in obeying the truth by the Spirit to the unfeigned love of the brethren," else you can never "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of our Father." No, you must be "shut out into utter darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."[2] What a dreadful prospect to every one who loves not the brethren, especially who, calling himself a brother, loves not the brethren! He that loves not his brother, hates him; and "he that hateth his brother is in darkness, walketh in darkness;"[3] and, though he may not know whither he is going, "for darkness hath blinded his eyes," "his feet go down to death, his steps take hold of hell," and he is moving onward to the blackness of darkness forever.

Oh that he would but open his eyes to "the light of life!" Oh that he would but look at the glory of God, as it irradiates the countenance of his incarnate Son! Then would he learn to love God; "the love of God would be shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given to him;" and, learning to love God, he would learn to love all his children, all his children of mankind, especially all his children by "faith in Christ Jesus." In the mutual kind offices of christian friendship, he would enjoy a satisfaction which worldly fellowship never can bestow; and in due time join the general assembly on high, where love has its triumphs; where "all the wise, the holy, and the just, who ever existed in the universe of God, shall be associated without any distress to trouble their mutual bliss, or any source of disagreement, either from within or without, to interrupt their harmony; where the voice of discord never rises, the whisper of suspicion never circulates;

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 22. [2] Matt. viii. 11, 12. [3] 1 John ii. 11.

where each, happy in himself, participates in the happiness of all the rest, and by reciprocal communications of love and friendship, at once receives from, and adds to, the sum of general felicity."[1] Who would not wish to belong to this happy society, this goodly fellowship, this glorious company! The door stands open: "Obey the truth by the Spirit." The road lies plainly before you: "Purify yourselves by this obedience." Thus shall you come immediately into the enjoyment of the fellowship of the saints on earth, and "being made meet for," shall ere long be made partakers of, the "inheritance of the saints" in heaven.

[1] Blair.

DISCOURSE VII.

A FIGURATIVE VIEW OF THE STATE AND CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS, WITH APPROPRIATE EXHORTATIONS.

1 Pet. ii. 1–3.—Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

On no subject is it of more importance that mankind should entertain correct views, than on the nature and extent of that inward change, that moral revolution, in which genuine personal Christianity originates, and which, according to the different aspects in which it is viewed, is termed effectual calling, conversion, repentance, or a change of mind, regeneration or the new birth. This, if anything, is a matter of fundamental, vital, practical importance. Error here cannot be innocent in either sense of the word. It can neither exist without fault, nor be held without danger. Mistakes on such a subject cannot be blameless, must be hazardous, may be fatal.

Yet on few points do even that part, that small part of mankind, who have made it in some small degree a subject of thought, err more seriously, and in opposite directions, than on this. By a large portion of men, very low, narrow views are entertained respecting the extent of the change, and the agency necessary in order to effect it. In their estimation, there is nothing radically wrong with human nature. Man has no doubt fallen into errors which need to be corrected; he has formed bad habits which require to be changed; but in order to effect such an alteration in human character and conduct, nothing more is necessary than to awaken into action the sleeping energies of his intellectual and moral nature, and direct them steadily towards the desired object; and education and self-discipline are held quite sufficient to answer this purpose.

On the other hand, not a few seem to think that the change is so entirely supernatural as to preclude the necessity and propriety of the employment of human agency as the means either of originating or advancing it. They seem to think, that it is so God's work, as that in no way is it, or can it be, man's work; that men have nothing to do in the matter, but to wait till God has made them new creatures, and that, after God has made them new creatures, they need give themselves no concern—God will look after his own work; and they, being quite sure of final salvation, have only to guard against unbelief, which, in their way of viewing it, means entertaining doubts with regard to the safety of their spiritual state, and the certainty of their ultimate happiness.

The passage of Scripture which I have just read, especially in connection with that which precedes it, cuts both these soul-ruining errors by the root. On the one hand, it teaches us plainly that the change is no superficial one. It is a new birth; there is a new moral nature produced, of which the ever-enduring, ever-living word of God is the seminal principle. It is a change produced by the Spirit; and the soul, the heart, the inner man, is the subject of this change. It is no such surface change as the progress of civilization, the authority of law, the influence of education, the force of self-discipline, can effect. It is a permanent, divinely effected change in the deepest springs of human action—the understanding, the conscience, and the affections.

But, on the other hand, it teaches us as plainly, that this change is effected through the knowledge and belief of the truth, in a manner quite consistent with man's rational, moral nature; with that freedom of choice which is essential to his being a responsible agent; that the change, though reaching every part of man's nature, is in no part of that nature complete or perfect; that though a new creature, he is but as a new-born babe, and needs to grow, and must use the appointed means of growth; that though he has "put on the new man," he needs more and more to "put off the old man, who is corrupt," and more and more to "put on the new man, who, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness;" that though he is made a "partaker of the divine nature, and has escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," he must "give all diligence to add to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity," knowing that, "if these things be in him and abound, he is not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and that "in doing these things," for doing which "the divine power has given to him all things that pertain to life and godliness," "he shall never fall, but *so* an entrance shall at last be ministered to him into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." [1]

These are the views given us in the context, and confirmed by many other passages of Scripture, in reference to that great change by which a natural man becomes a spiritual man; and in perfect accordance with them we find the apostle exhorting those who had by the Spirit been born again, to get rid, with all possible speed, of all the characteristics of their unregenerate state, and to seek, with untiring eagerness, progress and perfection in all the characteristics of their new state; and, for this purpose, constantly to employ the means in their own nature calculated, and by divine statute appointed, to gain these ends; accompanying his exhortation with powerful motives, suited to the nature of the duties enjoined, and the character and circumstances of those to whom the exhortation is addressed.

To this exhortation it is my purpose at present to turn your minds; and that it may have an appropriate effect on our understandings, consciences, and hearts, let us briefly consider, I. Who the persons are to whom the exhortation is addressed; II. What are the duties

[1] Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. 2 Pet. i. 3–11.

to which the exhortation urges; and, III. What are the motives by which the exhortation is enforced.

I.—THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE EXHORTATION IS ADDRESSED.

§ 1.—*General view of their state and character.*

The persons to whom the exhortation was primarily addressed were the Christians, chiefly recently converted Jews, scattered abroad through the regions of Asia Minor. They were a part of the mystical Israel, the spiritual people of God. They are described in the preceding chapter as "elected," chosen, selected from the rest of their brethren and from the world lying under the wicked one, like ancient Israel, not on the ground of their being better than others, but on the ground of the divine fore-knowledge or appointment,—the gracious sovereign decree of God; and, unlike their forefathers, they were by their selection separated or sanctified, not by an external, but by a spiritual separation, from the unbelieving part of mankind; and the object of this spiritual separation, originating entirely in sovereign mercy, was not that, like their forefathers, they might obey the law of Moses, and, being sprinkled with the blood of the victims by which the first covenant was ratified, might enjoy the external privileges of that covenant, but that they might obey the truth, believe the gospel, and, being sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ—that is, being personally interested in the saving results of his atoning sacrifice—they might enjoy the heavenly and spiritual blessings of the second covenant, of which the shedding of the blood of Christ, as an expiatory victim, was the effectual ratification. They were persons who through the resurrection of Christ—as the seal of the divine acceptance of his atoning sacrifice, and as one grand source of that evidence on which rests the faith which interests men personally in Christ and in his salvation—had been brought into the state, and formed to the character, of the children of God, secured of ultimate complete salvation as their inheritance, and blessed with a present living hope of that complete salvation. They were the sincere lovers of an unseen Saviour; they were devout worshippers of the Father. Their faith and their hope were in God, who had raised Christ Jesus from the dead, and given him glory. They had purified their souls in obeying the truth, so as to love the brethren unfeignedly; and the new relation into which they had been brought, both to God and to one another, by their regeneration, through the eternal Spirit and the ever-living word, was a permanent and indissoluble one.

Such are the statements respecting them in the former chapter; and in the passage before us, they are brought before our minds as, though regenerate, by no means perfect; really, but far from being completely, holy; having much to part with, and much to attain to, before reaching "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." They have need to "lay aside malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings." These words plainly imply, that the old man, though mortified, is not dead; that, though crucified, he has not

yet expired; that there still clings to them, as the fatal robe to the fabled hero, a corrupted nature. The putrifying dead body is still attached to the living man, which draws out the deep groan, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" There is still flesh as well as spirit, though in them the Spirit not only struggles, but prevails; but in their flesh dwells nothing that is good; dwells all that is evil. Of course, they need constant vigilance and energetic effort to prevent the encroachments, and to effect the eradication, of this evil principle.

§ 2.—*Particular, figurative view of their state and character as "new-born babes."*

But it is chiefly on the figurative representation in the passage, "new-born babes," that I wish to fix your attention. The ideas suggested by these words, respecting those whom they describe, are, I apprehend, principally these three: They have undergone, lately undergone, an important and very beneficial change; they are possessed of characters, of which some of the distinctive properties of infants are suitable emblems; and while they are not what they once were, they also are not what they shall be,—they are but "new-born babes;" they are far from being men in stature, and vigor, and understanding, and acquirement, and enjoyment.

(1.) They have undergone a great and salutary change of state. They have been brought out of a state of darkness, and pollution, and confinement, into a state of light, and purity, and glorious liberty. They are in a new, a better, a higher state of spiritual and moral being. New spiritual faculties have been developed. They are in a new world. The Jewish doctors were accustomed to call their proselytes little children. The change from Paganism to Judaism was great, and beneficial; but it was but an imperfect figure of the magnitude and blessedness of the change from nature to grace.

(2.) The term "new-born babes" seems intended to indicate character and disposition, as well as state and condition. To mark the distinctive character of his genuine disciples, our great Master states that they must become as "little children." When his disciples came to him, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? He "called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And on another occasion, when "they brought young children to him that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them, Jesus, on seeing this, was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."[1] It has been common to find the points of analogy between Christians, especially young Christians—new converts, and little children, in comparative

[1] Matt. xviii. 3; xix. 13, 14.

innocence and gentleness. But this I apprehend is to mistake our Lord's meaning. It is their conscious helplessness, their entire confiding dependence on others, their ready belief, as their faculties expand, of everything told them, till the falsehood of men teaches them distrust, that make infants fit emblems of the disciples of Christ. They "renounce themselves." They believe what he says to them, because he says it. They do what he bids them, because he bids them. They feel that they are entirely dependent on Him; and they are well pleased that it should be so. They confide in him, in his wisdom, in his power, in his grace, just as an affectionate child feels safe and happy in his father's house, or in his mother's arms, and takes no thought for himself, because he knows his father and mother will take thought for him; and never doubts either their affection for him, or their following out the dictates of that affection in protecting him from evil, and obtaining for him everything he needs.

As the reference here is to "new-born" infants, a leading idea intended to be conveyed to the mind seems to be, that, like new-born infants, the Christian has a kind of instinctive, unquenchable desire, after the suitable, spiritual aliment of his new nature. He loves the truth as it is in Jesus; he is restless when it is out of the view of the mind. The whole world without this cannot make him happy; and he never enjoys himself more, than when clearly apprehending the meaning and evidence of those "exceeding great and precious promises" by which his new nature is sustained; like the healthy infant on its mother's bosom, "he sucks, and is satisfied with these breasts of consolation: he milks out, and is delighted with the abundance of their glory." [1]

(3.) There is yet another idea which we conceive the figurative appellation is calculated and intended to bring before our minds. Young Christians are very far from being what they are yet to be even on earth; and all Christians are very far from being what they will be in heaven.

The young convert is to grow in all Christian excellence—to "grow up in all things to him who is the head." [2] Paul was a very different person when it was at first said of him, "Behold, he prayeth"—a poor helpless sinner falling into the arms of the Saviour,—and when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me; and not to me only, but to all that love his appearing." [3] And Paul even then was but a child in comparison of what Paul is now; the "spirit of a just man made perfect" "with the Lord," and fully, so far as his capacities admit, conformed to his mind and will, "like him, seeing him as he is."

This view of the subject is so beautifully illustrated by that heavenly man Leighton, that I can make no apology for the length of the following quotation:—"The whole estate and course of the Chris-

[1] Isaiah lxvi. 11.
[2] Eph. iv. 15.
[3] Acts ix. 11. Phil. iv. 13. 2 Tim. iv. 6–8.

tian's spiritual life here is called their infancy, not only as opposed to the corruption and wickedness of their previous state, but likewise as signifying the weakness and imperfection of it at the best in this life, compared with the perfection of the life to come; for the weakest beginnings of grace are by no means so far below the highest degree of it possible in this life, as the highest degree falls short of the state of glory: so that, if one measure of grace is called infancy in respect of another, much more is all grace infancy in respect of glory. And sure as for duration, the time of our present life is far less to eternity than the time of our natural infancy is to the rest of our life; so that we may still be called but new or lately born. Our best pace and strongest walking in obedience here, is but the stepping of children when they begin to go by hold, in comparison of the perfect obedience in glory, the stately, graceful steps with which, on the heights of Zion, we shall walk in the light of the Lord; when 'we shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.' All our knowledge here is but the ignorance of infants, and all our expressions of God and of his praises, are but as the first stammerings of children (which are, however, very pleasant both to child and parent), in comparison of the knowledge we shall have of him hereafter, 'when we shall know as we are known;' and of those praises we shall offer him, when that new song shall be taught us," which is sung before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and which none can learn but those who are redeemed from the earth.[1] "A child hath in it a reasonable soul; and yet, by the indisposedness of the body, and abundance of moisture, it is so bound up, that its difference from the beasts, and its partaking of a rational nature, is not so apparent as afterwards; and thus the spiritual life that is from above infused into a Christian, though it doth act and work in some degree, yet it is so clogged with natural corruption still remaining in him, that the excellency of it is much clouded and obscured: but in the life to come it shall have nothing at all encumbering and indisposing it. And this is the Apostle Paul's doctrine: 'For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known.'[2]

"And this is the wonder of divine grace, that brings so small beginnings to that height of perfection that we are not able to conceive of; that a little spark of true grace, that is not only indiscernible to others, but often to the Christian himself, should yet be the beginning of that condition wherein they shall shine brighter than the sun in the firmament. The difference is great in our natural life, in some persons especially, that they who in infancy were so feeble and wrapped up like others in swaddling-clothes, yet afterwards come to excel in wisdom and in the knowledge of the sciences, to be commanders of great armies, or to be kings: but the distance is far greater and more admirable, between the weakness of these new-born babes, the

[1] Rev. xiv. 3. [2] 1 Cor. xiii. 9–12.

small beginnings of grace, and their after perfection, that fulness of knowledge that we look for, and that crown of immortality that all are born to who are born of God. But as in the faces and actions of some children, characters and presages of their after greatness have appeared, as a singular beauty in Moses's countenance, as they write of him, and as Cyrus was made king among the shepherd's children, with whom he was brought up, so also certainly in these children of God there be some characters and evidences that they are born for heaven by their new birth. That holiness and meekness, that patience and faith, that shine in the actions and sufferings of the saints, are characters of their Father's image, and show their high original, and foretell their glory to come; such a glory as doth not only surpass the world's thoughts, but the thoughts of the children of God themselves. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.' "[1]

Before proceeding further in the exposition, let me urge the importance of putting this question seriously to ourselves, What part or lot have I in this matter? What is my state before God? What is my spiritual character? Have I been born again? Do I possess the instincts and dispositions of the new creature? The question is a serious one; for if I have not been born again, I am a stranger to true wisdom, worth, and happiness; and should I die, not having been born again, it had been better for me never to have been born. For, "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."[2] He can neither enjoy the peculiar blessings of Christianity here nor hereafter. The question is one which should not be difficult to answer; for the characteristic qualities of the new creature are sufficiently palpable. There is one in particular, with regard to which no one can mistake without absolute wilfulness: "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world."[3] He lives above the world, through the power of faith. The terrors of the world cannot drive him, the blandishments of the world cannot allure him, from the course on which he has entered. When he became a new creature, he came into a new creation; and "the world to come," in its power, opening on his mind, delivered him from the dominant influence of "the present evil world." Are you looking at things seen and temporal? Are present and sensible things the chief subjects of your thoughts, the chief objects of your affections? Then you have been born only of the flesh. "You must be born again." You must be thoroughly changed, for if you are not so, you are quite unfit for heaven; and heaven would be no heaven to you even were you placed in it. You must *repent*, that is, change your mind, for "except ye repent, ye *must* perish." There is no preventing it. The nature of things, the nature of God, require that it be so. But what hinders you from changing your mind? You are most assuredly wrong. Why should you not believe the truth clearly stated, abundantly accredited? "Repent, and believe the gospel." And in repenting, and believing the gospel, ye will be "born again," "transformed by the renewing of your minds;" and "being born again not

[1] John iii. 2. [2] John iii. 3. [3] 1 John, v. 4.

of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of the Lord, which liveth and endureth forever," you will become as "new-born babes," and will feel, what you cannot now do, how reasonable and right it is that ye "should desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" and "growing up into him in all things who is the Head," shall become every day while in the world more like him while he was in the world—in it—not of it; and at the appointed season, along with all the brethren, when he appears, shall be made, so far as the difference of your nature admits, like him, "seeing him as he is."

And you who through the agency of the Spirit, and the instrumentality of the word, have been born again, and become as little children, cultivate the childlike character. Confide in your heavenly Father's wisdom, power, grace, and faithfulness; trust not to your own understanding; implicitly believe his declarations, unhesitatingly comply with his injunctions. "Be anxious about nothing;" your heavenly Father knows what you need, and can deliver you out of every trial. But while you cultivate the childlike character, seek in connection with it the vigor and activity of mature manhood. "In malice" be always "children, but in understanding be men." Seek to have your spiritual "senses exercised, to discern truth and falsehood, good and evil." With the simplicity of childhood join the sagacity of age; and while in one sense ye always are children, become more and more children; in another, "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every word of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" but seek to arrive at "the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, at perfect manhood, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."[1] Brethren, we are glad when ye are "strong, through the word of God abiding in you," and enabling you to overcome the wicked one: and "this also we wish, even your perfection;" and this we pray, that "your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve the things which are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ: being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."[2]

So much for answer to the first question proposed, Who are the persons to whom the exhortation in the text is addressed?

II.—THE EXHORTATION.

Let us now attend to the exhortation itself; "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The exhortation is two-fold; first dissuasive, and then persuasive. The dissuasive exhortation is in these words: "Lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil-speaking,"—an exhortation to seek complete freedom from sin in all its forms and in all its degrees, and particularly in those forms which

[1] Heb. v. 14. Eph. iv. 14, 15. [2] 1 John ii. 14. 2 Cor. xiii. 9. Phil. i. 9–11.

interfere with the great christian duty of brotherly love, which the apostle had just been enjoining and recommending. The persuasive part of the exhortation is in these words: "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." This exhortation resolves itself into two parts: (1.) Seek spiritual growth; seek to grow wiser, better, happier; seek wider, more accurate, more influential views of divine truth; a firmer faith; deeper humility; a more assured hope; a warmer zeal; a more expanded operative benevolence; in one word, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" and (2.) Seek spiritual growth by appropriate means; desire "the sincere," the uncorrupted, and undeceiving appropriate nutriment of the new man, the "milk of the word," or the rational milk; the nutriment suited to a rational immortal being in the season of the development of its faculties. There is a connection, too, between the dissuasive and persuasive parts of the exhortation, which will require to be noticed, to prevent mistakes, and to secure all the advantages which the inspired counsel is calculated to communicate. Such is the outline I mean to fill up in the succeeding illustrations.

§ 1.—*The Dissuasive Exhortation.*

Let us attend then, in the first place, to the dissuasive part of the exhortation. "Lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings."

(1.) The first evil habit against which the apostle warns is, "malice."[1] It is the same word which is frequently in the New Testament rendered "wickedness," and sometimes stands for moral evil in all its forms and degrees, as in Acts viii. 22, "Repent of thy wickedness," and at verse 16 of this chapter, where Balaam is said to have been reproved for his "iniquity;" and some interpreters have understood it so here, as if the apostle had said, lay aside every form of evil, all error, all impiety, all malignity, every form of improper desire or pursuit; and, as if the other terms mentioned were merely explanatory of this general one, different forms of wickedness. At the same time the word is often in the New Testament used to describe a particular form of moral evil, and is not unfrequently employed as one of a number of words all expressive of different modifications of sinful principle and conduct.[2] I have no doubt that here it is equivalent to malignity, or ill-will, or malevolent disposition.

Self-love is a leading principle in human nature. In depraved human nature this useful, necessary principle is in excess,—supreme instead of subordinate. Self-love thus becomes selfishness, and being connected with false views of our own interest, which we are led to think inconsistent with that of others, takes the form of malignity, ill-will towards others whose interests seem to stand in the way of our own. This disposition is the very reverse of the love which leads to the fulfilling of the law in reference to our fellow-men. If that is "the fulfilling," this is "the violation" of the law; for if love doeth, can do, no injury to a brother, malice, ill-will, can do him no

[1] Κακία. [2] Rom. i. 29. Eph. iv. 31. Col. iii. 8. Tit. iii. 3. James i. 21.

good, and will do him all the harm which it finds necessary to gain its mere selfish objects.

(2.) The objects malice seeks are not such as can creditably be avowed and prosecuted. Malice, therefore, naturally leads to "guile" or deceit, the second of the evil habits denounced by the apostle. The word is descriptive of all fraudulent, deceitful means for gaining an end; it is a general name for all untruthfulness and dishonesty, from their most refined to their grossest forms. To manage these deceits with any probability of success, a man must not appear to be what he is: he must act a part, he must be a hypocrite, a stage-player. The known open liar, the notoriously dishonest person, has little power to deceive. When Satan would deceive, he assumes the appearance of an angel of light. When our Lord's enemies sought to entrap him, they "sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him to the power and authority of the governor."[1] Here you see malice leading to deceit, and deceit to "hypocrisy."

(3.) The "hypocrisy" here forbidden is the pretending to be what we are not; to have excellences, or degrees of excellence, of which we are destitute; to have respect or affection, when we have it not, or to have it in a degree far beyond what we really feel. As the opposite of malice is love, and of deceit uprightness; so the opposite of hypocrisy is sincerity, the speaking the truth as it is in the heart, the expressing in language and conduct our real sentiments and feelings, the being in appearance what we are in reality.

(4.) "Envy" is the fourth evil disposition which the apostle requires to be laid beside. It is the natural effect of malice, or ill-will. The word properly signifies the uneasiness which a malignant man feels in the happiness of the object of his ill-will, and the restless, painful desire he has to deprive him of his advantages, especially of those which he possesses in larger measure than the malevolent person himself. It is the corruption of the natural principle of emulation, or the desire to excel, which seeks its gratification fully as much in bringing its object below our level, as in raising ourselves honorably to his level, or above it; and one of the most ordinary methods which it employs, in order to gain this unworthy end, is the fifth and last bad habit from which the apostle here dissuades.

(5.) "Evil-speakings." Calumnious slander is the worst form of this evil; but all whisperings and backbitings, all sly insinuations, hinting at faults and hesitating dislike, every species of statement having for its object the lowering the reputation of another, which justice does not require, as well as truth warrant, are included.[2] The mouth is as it were the vent through which the smoke and flames of the infernal fire of malice and envy, which rages as in a furnace within, escape, polluting and withering all around.

Such are the evil tempers and habits which the apostle dissuades from. You see how closely they are connected, how naturally the

[1] Luke xx. 20.

[2] Πάσας καταλαλιὰς. Multis modis committitur detractio, aut bonum negando, aut obfuscando, aut diminuendo, aut malum ascribendo, aut intentionem in bono opere pervertendo.—Jo. Hus.

one produces the other; and you must observe how all of them are directly opposed to that "sincere fervent love" which he had been, and still is, inculcating, as one of the Christian's first duties.

The exhortation of the apostle is, "lay aside these evil tempers and habits." This exhortation strongly implies that those addressed had been originally depraved, wholly depraved beings, and that they were still partially under the influence of depravity. The exhortation is not, beware of putting these on, but put them off. Every renewed man has in his flesh his unrenewed nature,—the evil heart,—the seminal principle of every species of moral evil; and I do not know what is the sin which, if he is unwatchful, unprayerful, exposed to temptation, and unrestrained by divine influence, he may not commit. Such exhortations to regenerate persons loudly proclaim, "Be vigilant;" repress the first movements of evil; shun even its appearance: "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."[1]

The exhortation of the apostle is, not to cover these unsightly deformities of the old man with the veil of an assumed courteousness and politeness, or sanctimony. In his estimation, and in that of his Master, these were, however admired by men, abominable in God's sight, being but forms of that hypocrisy which he so pointedly condemns. To do this were to add iniquity to iniquity. The exhortation is to "lay them aside." The object of Christianity is not to conceal the evil which still exists, and exists it may be but in the greater force, acts but with the greater virulence, because it is concealed; but it is to destroy it, so that there may be no need of concealment, because there is nothing to conceal.

The apostle does not require the modification, but the extinction, of those evil principles. The filthy rags must not be mended, and in some measure purified; they are to be put off, and cast away. Christian morality is very uncompromising. Those polluted vestments, fast as they may cling to the diseased mind, must be torn off. Every one of them; *all* malice, *all* guile, hypocrisies, and envies, and *all* evil-speakings, must be put off. There is no exception; all sin, in all its forms and in all its degrees, must be abandoned, abandoned forever. It is impossible to read this passage without being impressed with the inward, thorough character of the Christian morality, the spirituality of "the royal law," "the law of Christ." "Malice and envy" are forbidden, as well as "deceit, and hypocrisies, and evil-speakings."

And you will observe, too, the order in which the prohibition stands. In the world's morality, they set about pruning the branches while the root is undisturbed; and the evil tree is often rather strengthened than weakened by the process; but here "the axe is laid to the root of the tree." Lay aside *malice*. If that is laid aside, deceit and hypocrisy will soon disappear, and never re-appear. Destroy the root; the leaves, and even the stem, will soon wither and die. Lay aside envies, and there will be no evil-speakings. Such is the import of the dissuasive part of the exhortation.

And now, my brethren, let us open our hearts to the word of ex-

[1] 1 Peter i. 8. 1 Cor. x. 12.

hortation here addressed to us. Let us not turn aside from these statements, as too plain and common-place to deserve much consideration. Do some say, we know all this already? I answer with my Master, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" but if ye do them not, it had been better for you that you had not known them. The preaching of christian doctrine and law is intended for some other, some nobler purpose, than to add to the stock of what has been termed "men's speculative discoursing knowledge." There is something wrong, either with the minister or the people, it may be with both, when plain christianly moral discourses are not delivered, or not relished. It was a proof of anything but growth in spiritual strength, when the Israelites loathed the daily manna, called it dry food, and required flesh to satisfy their lust. It is a very bad sign of a man if he does not like a plain practical sermon. "There is," as one well remarks, "an intemperance of the mind as well as the mouth. You would think, and may be not spare to call it a poor, cold sermon, that was made up of such plain precepts as those which have been the subject of discourse. And yet this is the language of God; it is his way, this foolish despicable way, by which he guides and brings to heaven them that believe."[1]

Let us never forget that Christianity is the religion of love and the religion of truth. The spirit which the Father hath given us is the spirit of meekness and charity. That dovelike spirit dwelt without measure in our Head, and by him is communicated in various degrees to all his members. "If we have not the spirit of Christ, we are none of his."[2] Let us remember that the true way to put off malice is to put on charity; and the true way to put on charity is to put on Christ; so as that the mind which was in him may be in us.

Let us then "walk in love," and in truth as well as in love. Let us put off all deceits and hypocrisies. There is a meanness in hypocrisy which should make us despise it, a folly in it which should make us ashamed of it, as well as an impiety in it which should make us abhor it. Oh, "what is the hope of the hypocrite, when he has gained the whole world, when God taketh away his soul?"[3] "What avails it to wear this mask? A man may indeed, in the sight of men, act his part handsomely under it; but know we not, that there is an eye that sees through it, and a hand which, if we will not put off this mask, will put it off to our shame, either here in the sight of men, or if we should escape all our life, and go fair off the stage under it, yet there is a day appointed when all hypocrites will be unveiled, and appear what they are indeed, before men and angels? It is a poor thing to be approved or even applauded by men, while God condemns, by whose sentence all must stand or fall. Let us seek to be approved and justified by him, and then who shall condemn? It does not matter who do. Oh, how lightly may the contempt and reproaches of men lie on us, if we are but secure of his approbation! It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; there is one that judgeth me, that is the Lord."[4]

There is a common, and I am afraid by no means unfounded, com-

[1] Leighton.
[2] Rom. viii. 9.
[3] Job xxvii. 8.
[4] Leighton.

plaint, that many hearers of the word are wholly unfruitful, and that others are little edified. Our text furnishes us with the true account of this melancholy fact. They do not "lay aside malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil-speakings." Till they do so, though they were under the ministry of an angel, they would never receive the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby. Those who wish to get good from the word of God, must guard against all those tempers which war with truth and love.

There is no keeping out of controversy at all times in our world, without sacrificing truth; but controversy is full of hazards. Alas! how seldom is it conducted, even on substantially the right side, without "malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil-speakings!" And so strangely deluded are men, that they often seem to think that the more they are under the influence of those unchristian principles, while professedly, and it may be really, contending for christian truth, so much the better Christians are they. They seem to measure their love for the truth, by their hatred of those who they suppose are opposing it. I trust we, my brethren, have not so learned Christ; but that "having heard him, and been taught of him the truth as it is in Jesus, we are putting off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and are renewed in the spirit of our minds; putting on the new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; and putting away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, with all malice." Then will "the word of Christ dwell in us richly," and then will the light of God shine in our minds, and "the peace of God rule in our hearts." [1]

§ 2.—*The Persuasive Exhortation.*

The persuasive part of the exhortation comes now before us for consideration: "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." [2] This exhortation refers both to an end, and to the means by which this end is to be accomplished. The end is the attainment of spiritual growth, and the means, the taking spiritual nourishment. Thus the exhortation naturally divides itself into two parts. (1.) Seek spiritual growth, that is the end; and (2.) "Desire the sincere milk of the word," that is the means; for it is by the right use of this appropriate nourishment that spiritual growth is to be attained. Let us look at these two exhortations, first separately, and then in their relation to each other.

(1.) The first exhortation is, seek spiritual growth. The figurative view of the state and character of the persons addressed, "new-born babes," and the corresponding view of their daily "growth," suggest

[1] Eph. iv. 20–24, 31. Col. iii. 15, 16.

[2] It is right to notice that the words εἰς σωτηρίαν—"unto salvation"—follow ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ αὐξηθῆτε—"that ye may grow thereby," in most of the Codd. and old translations, and that all the great critical editors of the New Testament, with the exception of Mill, consider them as entitled to a place in the text. They do not materially change the sense. They mark salvation—complete deliverance from evil in every form and degree—as the end of spiritual growth, and spiritual growth through the use of the γάλα λογικὸν as the appointed means of salvation. The phrase εἰς σωτηρίαν may be thus resolved—εἰς τὸ τυγχάνειν ὑμᾶς τῆς σωτηρίας, "that you may thus obtain salvation."—Eph. iv. 13.

the ideas of life, of faculty, and of imperfection. What is dead cannot grow, what is perfect does not need to grow. Life is necessary to growth, vegetable life to vegetable growth, animal life to animal growth, rational life to rational growth, spiritual life to spiritual growth. The still-born babe never grows. It is the living new-born babe that grows. Till a man is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," even of that word which in the gospel is preached to us, he is destitute of spiritual life, and therefore he is incapable of spiritual growth. On all such men the declaration of our Lord must be urged: "Ye must be born again, ye must repent and be converted." The persons addressed here are plainly persons who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, having been brought to believe the saving truth, have undergone a radical change of mind and heart, of sentiment and disposition. They are spiritually alive, they can perform the functions of spiritual living beings, they are capable of spiritual growth.

But the idea of imperfection is just as plainly suggested by the figurative language of the text as that of capacity. They are living beings; but the principle of life, though unextinguishable, is as yet feeble. They need to grow. They have not been all at once brought into a state of spiritual perfection. Their emblem is not Adam, proceeding from the hand of God in all the completeness of manhood; it is the new-born babe. And they need not only to grow, but to grow a great deal. They are not represented as youths just approaching manhood, they are "new-born babes." They have entered on their course, but only entered. Even in the case of those who have proceeded farthest, what is behind is as nothing in comparison of what is before them. They have "not attained." This is the testimony respecting himself of one who had made more progress perhaps than any other. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." [1]

But we have said enough of what is presupposed in the injunction, to "grow as new-born babes." Let us now inquire into its meaning. What is it, then, to grow? For the natural new-born babe to grow, is to increase in size, and strength, and beauty, and intelligence, and in the active, graceful use of all its various faculties. For the spiritual new-born babe to grow, is to increase in the knowledge of the only true God and his Son Jesus, which is eternal life, obtaining more extensive, more accurate, more influential views, on this boundlessly extensive and infinitely important subject; in the faith of the truth as it is in Jesus; in the love of God, of Christ, of the brethren, of all mankind; in reliance on the free grace of the Father, the finished work of the Son, the promised aids of the Spirit; in knowledge and heartfelt conviction of his own worthlessness and helplessness, weakness and folly; in deep humility; in hatred of sin; in vigilance against temptation; in love of holiness; in zeal for the divine honor; in growing delight in God as the portion of the soul; in weanedness from the world; in a spirit of self-sacrifice for God's glory and man's salvation; in desire for the pure peace, the holy happiness of heaven; and by the growth of these principles, "being strengthened with all

[1] Phil. iii. 12.

might in the inner man," to become more alert, and constant, and persevering in performing all the functions of the new life, both inward and outward; doing and suffering the will of God; "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;" "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" walking at liberty; keeping God's commandments, "fighting the good fight of faith," running "the race that is set before him."

Growth in the knowledge of christian truth, is that on which spiritual growth generally depends. The great influential principles of saving truth are few and simple, and some are apt to think that they are easily, and soon, fully learned. But this is a dangerous mistake. The oldest and most intelligent Christian may grow in the knowledge of these truths. It is a very important remark, that after a man is really converted, growth in knowledge consists chiefly in knowing better the very truths by which conversion has been produced. He may see more deeply into the meaning of those truths which he had only a general notion of; he may see additional evidence of their truth; he may see more of their mutual connection and dependence; he may see more of the uses they are intended to serve; he may obtain more skill in turning them to their proper use, both to himself and others; he may obtain a more deep and extensive experimental acquaintance with them, and he may rise to a much higher esteem for, and love of them. The most important kind of growth in knowledge to a true Christian, is to grow in the knowledge of what he does know, rather than to grow in knowledge by acquiring an acquaintance with something that he does not know. The addition of some degrees to the more needful parts of knowledge which we already possess, will go further to promote spiritual growth, than the acquisition of knowledge respecting less necessary things, of which we are ignorant. Every Christian knows the doctrine of Christ crucified; but many a Christian knows little about scholastic questions respecting the decrees of God, and the subjects of baptism, and the government of the Church. His spiritual growth will be more impeded by imperfection in the knowledge of the former, than by absolute ignorance of the latter; and his spiritual growth will be more advanced by knowing a little more of that which he already knows, than by obtaining even the most accurate information on the points of which he is ignorant. It is an admirable observation of an old divine, "There is enough in one of the articles of our faith, in one of God's attributes, in one of Christ's benefits, in one of the Spirit's graces, to hold you in study all your lives, and afford you still an increase of knowledge. To know God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, and their relations to you, and operations for you, and your duties to them, and the way of communion with them, is a knowledge in which we may, we must be, still growing, till it be perfected by the celestial beatifical vision."[1]

It is difficult to conceive a finer or more complete description of what spiritual growth is, than that embodied in a prayer by the Apostle Paul for the Philippian Christians: "And this I pray, that your

[1] Baxter.

love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." [1] To use the words of one far advanced towards "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," "That Christian is a growing Christian who abounds more and more in the varied exercises of that holy love which is the fulfilment of this royal law; whose love is directed and regulated by increasing knowledge, wisdom, and judgment; who acquires by exercise, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the habit of prudently examining, and accurately distinguishing, between the things that differ, abhorring the evil, and cleaving to the good more entirely and heartily from day to day; who becomes more known and approved for sincerity and integrity in all his professions and engagements, and more singly devoted to God as he advances in years; who becomes more and more circumspect in his words and works, that he may neither inadvertently fall himself, nor cause others to stumble; who becomes more fervent in prayer, to be preserved from bringing any reproach on the gospel to the end of his course; who becomes more abundantly fruitful in the works of righteousness, while at the same time he lies lower before God in deep humility, and is more willing than ever to be abased among men; who acts more and more habitually with the invisible God and the eternal world before his mind, and relies more entirely on the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus, who thus becomes more precious to his soul; whose dependence on the providence of God becomes more uniform, and accompanied with greater composure, submission, and constancy in the path of duty. This is the growing Christian. Nothing material to the christian character seems wanting. The various holy dispositions and affections, resulting from regeneration, are advancing to maturity in just proportion and coincidence, and he is evidently ripening for the work, worship, and joy of heaven." [2] Take another representation of spiritual growth by our apostle himself. He grows spiritually, who having been called to glory and virtue, and made a partaker of a divine nature, through the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel understood and believed by him, "adds to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; who has these things in him, and abounding in him, and is not idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." [3]

We have now got the general idea of spiritual growth; it is just progressive sanctification. Grow spiritually, is in plain terms, become more and more holy. But we shall fail of getting all the instruction which the inspired writer's words are intended and fitted to convey, if we do not inquire whether there are not some important truths, in reference to progressive holiness, suggested by the figurative view here given of it. Are there not certain points of resemblance between natural growth and progressive holiness, which deserve

[1] Phil. i. 9–11. [2] Scott. [3] 2 Pet. i. 5–7.

notice? We apprehend there are, and, principally, the following. Both are, in the sense proper to them, natural; both are gradual, and upon the whole constant; both are universal and generally simultaneous; and both of them are perceptible, and sometimes more perceptible to others than to their subject. A word or two of illustration on these instructive points of resemblance, is all that is necessary.

1. It is the order of the natural world for the child to grow. It is the order of the spiritual world for the saint to improve. An infant not growing, but wasting away, is an unnatural and melancholy object; and still more unnatural, still more melancholy, is it for one who seems to be a saint to be seen becoming no wiser, no better, or, more deplorable still, becoming worse. There is want of nourishment, or disease, in both cases, where there is not growth. Truth, it has been said, does not lie in the heart as a stone on the earth, but as seed in the earth, which naturally germinates.

2. Growth is gradual—very gradual, and so is christian improvement. No infant becomes a man at once, but every day sees him nearer manhood; and so is it in the spiritual world. The saint becomes gradually wiser and better. Like the child, he makes more progress at some times than others; yet in all cases the progress is gentle, not sudden. And as, when in health, the child is always growing, so when the Christian is not laboring under spiritual disease, he is always making progress.

3. When the child grows, the whole of its body and mind grows. Swelling, which is a diseased unnatural affection, may be confined to a part of the body, but natural growth extends to the whole of it. And so it is with the spiritual new-born babe. He grows in knowledge, and faith, and holiness, and comfort, at the same time. And the growth in both cases, where things are as they ought to be, is proportional. It also deserves notice, that though there be general growth, if any part of the system be preternaturally active, if any member of the body is preternaturally enlarged, any faculty of the mind preternaturally developed, there is disease and disorder. And so it is in the spiritual world. If the understanding be enlightened while the affections are not proportionally affected, or if the affections are strongly excited while the understanding is not proportionally enlightened, there is no healthy growth, no satisfactory progress. Healthy nourishment in a healthy constitution, whether bodily or mental, natural or spiritual, produces both universal and simultaneous growth.

4. Where there is real growth, it will be perceptible; not peceptible in its progress, but perceptible in its effects. In the case of a healthy child, he who sees it when new-born, and when it is a twelvemonth old, distinctly perceives that there has been growth. In the same way, a person who sees a young convert, if he meets with him months or years after, will perceive progress both in knowledge and in holiness. The child is seldom sensible of growth. It requires to look back, and compare what it is now with what it recollects itself to have been, to convince it of its having grown. And so it is with the spiritual babe. It is only by comparing what he now is with what he was at some previous period, that he can be convinced that

he is making progress. Indeed, not unfrequently, from the increase both of spiritual sensibility and spiritual perspicacity, he feels as if, instead of becoming better, he was becoming worse. He is, in his own feelings, less conformed to the divine law as he now sees it, than he was, it may be years ago, as he then saw it. And yet this may be, indeed is, one of the best proofs that there is progress in knowledge, both of God's law and of himself; and in a corresponding humility and growing dependence on the atonement as the ground of acceptance, and on the Spirit as the fountain of holiness. The sight Christians have of their defects in grace, and their thirst after greater measures of grace, make them think they do not grow when indeed they do.[1]

A healthy child grows without thinking much about its growth. It takes its food and its exercise, and finds that it is growing in the increase of its strength and its capacity for exertion. And an analogous state is, I believe, the healthiest state of the spiritual new-born babe. While self-examination, rightly managed, is very useful, a morbid desire of the satisfaction of knowing that we are improving, is in danger of drawing the mind away from the constant employment of the means of spiritual nourishment and health. The best state of things is, when, in the healthy, vigorous condition of the spiritual constitution, ready for every good work, we have the evidence in ourselves that we are growing; and when that is wanting, application to the sincere milk of the word will do a great deal more good than poring into ourselves, to find proof either that we are growing or not growing. So much for the first part of the persuasive exhortation, 'Seek spiritual growth.'

(2.) The second part of the exhortation refers to the means for gaining this end—spiritual growth. "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." There are here three things which we must attend to—1. What is this sincere milk of the word? 2. How is it that we grow by it? 3. And what is it to desire this sincere milk of the word?

1. The phrase "milk of the word" is singular, and a variety of opinions have been entertained both as to its reference and meaning. If we can certainly fix the first, there will be comparatively little difficulty in apprehending the second. Some, among whom we are surprised to find the judicious Calvin, have supposed that the reference is to those christian virtues which stand in direct opposition to the vices which are condemned in the previous verse; but these cannot well be represented as the spiritual food of the spiritual new-born babe. They are rather the symptoms that the food has produced its proper effect in the bloom and vigor of a healthful frame. The inspired writer furnishes us with the means of determining the reference. Whatever the milk of the word be, it is that by which spiritual new-born babes are nourished; in plainer words, it is that by which the sanctification and holy happiness of the regenerate soul are promoted. Now there can be no doubt, that that is divine truth understood and believed. It is "by this that men live; in this is the

[1] Watson.

life of our souls." "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth," says our Lord. "Purifying their hearts by faith," says the Apostle Peter. "Grace, mercy, and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of this truth." "It is by unity of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, that we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," says the Apostle Paul.[1]

The reference then, without doubt, is to the truth respecting the divine character revealed in the Holy Scriptures; but what is the precise meaning of the phrase, "the milk of the word?" The milk is plainly equivalent to the appropriate nourishment; what serves the same purpose to Christians, especially new converts, that the mother's milk does to the new-born babe. The "milk of the word" may either mean the spiritual nourishment which is contained in that word spoken of in the previous context, "the word of the Lord which liveth and abideth forever, the word of the gospel preached to us;" or it may mean rational nourishment, nourishment suited to the rational spiritual nature of man, as milk is to his physical or animal nature;[2] just as the same word is employed in Rom. xii. 1, "reasonable service,"[3] rather national worship; the presenting our bodies living sacrifices being contrasted with the animal sacrifices under the Old Testament dispensation. It does not matter which interpretation we prefer, both bringing out a truth, and an important and appropriate one.

Spiritual truth is compared to milk; to intimate its simplicity, its pleasantness to the unsophisticated spiritual palate, and its tendency to produce spiritual growth.

This milk of the word is described by the apostle as "sincere." The application of the term seems strange, sincerity being with us always considered as a moral, not a physical attribute, a quality not of things, but of persons. It is one of the comparatively rare instances of the use of a word in an obsolete sense in our translation. The original word, when applied to persons, or figuratively to things, means undeceiving; when applied to things in a proper sense, it means pure, unmixed, unadulterated. In either sense it is very applicable. The word of God is pure truth, without the slightest admixture of error; it is only in the degree in which this pure truth is contained in any statement, that that statement is spiritually nourishing; and this pure word is undeceiving; it does what it professes to do, it really nourishes. "It converts the soul, it makes wise the simple, it rejoices the heart, it enlightens the eyes." It "is able to build us up; to save the soul."[4]

2. These remarks may suffice to give us a distinct apprehension of the meaning of the terms; but it is required that we look a little deeper into the subject, and inquire how it is that the spiritual newborn babe grows by this pure, undeceiving milk of the word; how divine truth produces spiritual growth. It does not operate as a charm. The power of truth to sanctify the believer is just as much a part of

[1] John xvii. 17. Acts xv. 9. 2 Pet. i. 2. Eph. iv. 13.

[2] Λογικὸν in contrast with φυσικὸν. "Τὸ λογικὸν id est μυστικὸν, τὸ νοητὸν." Rom. xii. 1. Spirituale bene vertit Syrus.—GROTIUS.—Geistlich.—LUTHER.

[3] Λογικὴν λατρείαν.

[4] Psal. xix. 7. James i. 21.

the order of the spiritual world, as the power of milk to nourish the new-born babe is of the order of the natural world. It is easy to see that spiritual knowledge can be increased just as it was originally obtained, only by means of the only revelation of spiritual truth being apprehended by the mind; how faith can grow only by a growing apprehension of the truth which is the object of faith, and of the evidence which is the ground of faith. It is the representation of the loveliness and amiableness of God contained in the word, understood and believed, that produces love and confidence in him. It is the representation of his awful majesty and infinite holiness which produces reverence. It is the view it gives us of sin and of ourselves that produces humility and watchfulness. The precepts show us what to be and to do; and the promises and warnings furnish us with powerful motives to comply with the precepts, and thus make us, both in character and conduct, what God would have us to be. Every portion of divine truth is intended and calculated to tell on the growth of some portion of the new man; on the development of some of his faculties; the strengthening of some of his energies; the beautifying of some of his features. To borrow a figure from the Apostle Paul, Divine truth or doctrine is the mould in which the new creature is cast,[1] and every portion of it leaves a corresponding impression. "Truths are the seal, the soul is the wax, and holiness is the impression made by the seal on the wax." [2]

3. Now, the exhortation of the apostle to those whom he addresses is, that they should "desire" this unadulterated, undeceiving nourishment, in order to their growth. The force of the exhortation, "desire" the sincere milk of the word, is, 'see that ye feel and act in reference to that truth which is the nourishment of your souls, as new-born infants do in reference to that which is the appropriate nutriment of their bodies. Desire it as new-born babes; show that you cannot do without it; that you must have it; that nothing will do as a substitute; that you relish it; that you are satisfied with it; that you never weary of it; that you return to it again and again, with unabated, with ever-increasing delight.' [3] The temper enjoined is that which is so beautifully embodied in the "burning words" of David, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. I will meditate in thy precepts. I will delight myself in thy statutes. I will never forget thy word. My soul breaketh for the longing it hath at all times unto thy judgments. Grant me thy law graciously. I have stuck to thy testimonies. I have longed after thy precepts. I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I love. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. I will never forget thy precepts; for by them hast thou quickened me. How sweet are thy words to my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever; for they are the

[1] Τύπον διδαχῆς εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε.—Rom. vi. 17. [2] Baxter.

[3] Ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα. Ut modogeniti qui nihil aliud agunt; tantum appetunt.—BENGEL. Ὥσπερ γὰρ τὰ ἀρτίτοκα τῶν βρεφῶν οὐδεὶς διδάσκει τὴν τροφὴν, αὐτόματα δὲ ἐκμανθάνει καὶ οἶδεν ἐν τοῖς μαζοῖς οὖσαν αὐτοῖς τὴν τράπεζαν—Achilles Tatius, l. i. cit. ab. Elsnero.

rejoicing of my heart. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting. Give me understanding, and I shall live. Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O Lord! according to thy loving-kindness. Give me understanding according to thy word. My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness. I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord! and thy law is my delight. More to be desired are the judgments of God than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward." I think no one now can have any difficulty in understanding what it is to "desire the sincere milk of the word as new-born babes." O that we all knew more of it by our own personal experience! In this case we should be both better and happier men.

Fully to apprehend the force of the apostle's exhortation, we must connect the exercise enjoined with the end for which it is enjoined. Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. "Desire the word," says the pious Leighton, "not that ye may only hear it; that is, to fall very short of its true end. Yea, it is to take the beginning of the work for the end of it. The ear is indeed the mouth of the mind, by which it receives the word, as Elihu compares it. 'The ear heareth words as the mouth tasteth meat:' but meat that goes no farther than the mouth cannot nourish. Neither ought this desire of the word to be only to satisfy a custom; it were an exceeding folly to make so superficial a thing the end of so serious a work. Again, to hear it only to stop the mouth of conscience, that it may not clamor more for the gross impiety of contemning it—this is not to hear it out of desire, but out of fear. To desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it: that there is delight in it, may commend it to those who find it so, and so be a means to advance the end; but the end it is not. To seek no more but a present delight, that vanisheth with the sound by the words that die in the air, is not to desire the word as meat, but as music. To desire the word for the mere increase of spiritual knowledge, or for the venting of that knowledge in speech, and frequent discourses, is still to miss the true end. If any one's head or tongue should grow apace, while all the rest of the body stand at a stay, it would certainly make him a monster: and they are no other, that are knowing and discoursing Christians, and grow daily in that, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God." Our object in desiring the sincere milk of the word, in studying with intense interest the truth as revealed in the word of God, is, that we may, as men of God, be "thoroughly furnished for every good work." [1]

The dissuasive and the persuasive parts of the exhortation, are closely connected. "Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The idea in-

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 17.

tended to be conveyed by thus connecting the two exhortations, is not, that the one must be fully complied with before we can obey the other, that we must get rid of all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, before we at all "desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby." The true view of the matter is, that the two parts of the exhortation must be obeyed at the same time. A man full of "malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings,"cannot "desire the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby." A man who "desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby," cannot be clothed in malice, and other evil habits. The two exercises mutually influence each other. Nothing can displace "malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and evil-speakings," but truth believed. But the putting off of malice, and the other evil habits, greatly promotes desire of the sincere milk of the word; while, just as we yield to this desire, "malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and all other evil habits, are put off. The body cannot grow in a fever, the soul cannot thrive where sinful dispositions are cherished: yet it is returning health which expels disease. It is just like some other scriptural injunctions, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well;" we cannot cease to do evil but in the degree in which we learn to do well; and in the degree in which we cease to do evil, do we learn to do well. "Repent, and believe the gospel." It is the gospel, coming into the mind in its meaning and evidence, that changes the mind; and it is in that change of mind that we believe the gospel.

If you have listened attentively, I think you can scarcely have failed to gain a distinct apprehension of the meaning of the exhortation which has been the subject of discourse. The important question is, Have you complied, are you complying, with the exhortation?

I turn, first, to those who have been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," and I ask them, Have you not much need to grow? Are you not yet very infantine, babes when you ought to have been young men, if not fathers? Have you not much need to grow in knowledge? Are you able "to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the faith and hope that is in you?" Does "the word of Christ dwell in you in all wisdom?" Have you clear, satisfactory views of the economy of mercy, of the system of divine truth? Can you "discern the things that differ so as to approve the things which are excellent?" Have not too many of us reason to say, when "for the time we ought to have been teachers, we have need that some one teach us again what be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat?"[1]

Have you not need to grow in holiness? Is there not much wanting, much wrong? Have you no corrupt propensities to resist and subdue? Are you "strong in faith?" Do you "abound in hope?" Does "the love of God reign in your hearts?" Have you "overcome the world?" Are you "clothed with humility?" Is your worship always spiritual, and your obedience impartial, habitual, universal,

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 15. Col. iii. 16. Phil. i. 10. Heb. v. 12–14.

cheerful? Have you not cause to say, "my leanness, my leanness; my soul cleaveth to the dust." [1]

Have you not need to grow in holy happiness? Have you, "believing, entered into rest?" Are you "anxious for nothing?" Do you habitually "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement?" Are you able to "glory in tribulation?" to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God?" Do you "walk in the light of God's countenance, rejoice in his name all the day, and are you exalted in his righteousness?" or are you not beset with doubts and perplexities, walking in darkness, and having but little light. It is intended that you should grow. An infant is not born to continue an infant, for that were to be a monster, but to grow up to manhood. If you do not grow, it is not because growth is unnecessary. There are labors and trials before you, which require the vigor and intelligence of manhood. To perform these labors aright, to endure these trials aright, you must "quit yourselves like *men*, and be strong." [2]

Now on all who feel that they need to grow, and are sensible of the importance of growth, I would press the exhortation of the apostle, "Desire the sincere milk of the word." Alas, what a multitude of dwarfs, as Richard Baxter says, has Christ, that are but like infants, though they have numbered ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or even sixty years of spiritual life. Go not to yourselves, go not to your fellows; go to God in his word for his Spirit, and seek growth there. That is the only way to grow. True holiness, true happiness, can be obtained in no other way. Various methods may be employed, various methods have been employed, to produce the feeling and the appearance of spiritual health and growth. But in vain. Men may by other methods be bolstered up in vain confidence, amused with delusive joys; but they cannot be made really happy. They may be brought to make a fair show in the flesh; but they cannot be made really holy. The milk of the word, the unadulterated milk of the word, is the only wholesome nourishment of the new-born soul. Divine truth lodged in the mind and heart, by the influence of the good Spirit, is the only well of living water which will spring up unto eternal life. Seek, then, to "grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." "Let his word dwell in you richly, in all wisdom;" and under its influence, "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." [3]

We your ministers have a subordinate, yet still an important part to perform, in promoting your growth in grace. It consists chiefly in "holding forth to you the word of life," in bringing before your mind, and keeping before your mind, "the truth as it is in Jesus;" and it is our earnest desire not to handle this word of the Lord deceitfully, but, "in the manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God;" for we trust "we are not as many which corrupt the word of God," adulterate the sincere milk of the word, "but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the

[1] Rom. iv. 19; xv. 13. 1 John v. 4. 1 Pet. v. 5. Isa. xxiv. 16. Psal. cxix. 25.
[2] Heb. iv. 3. Phil. iv. 6. Rom. v. 3, 11. Isa. l. 10. 1 Cor. xvi. 13.
[3] 2 Pet. iii. 18. Col. iii. 16; i. 10.

sight of God, speak we in Christ." "Teaching every man in all wisdom, we would fain present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." May our wishes be realized; may our labors not be in vain! "May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever." [1]

But there are those here, I am afraid, whom I cannot call on to *grow*, for they are dead; nay, I am afraid, there may be some here who are "twice dead, plucked up by the roots." I cannot call on you to come to the word that you may grow, but I do call on you to come to the word that you may *live*; for that word of Christ is "spirit and life," living and life-giving. "He that believes" it, "though he were dead, yet shall he live." "Awake, then, ye that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." "Repent, and believe the gospel." "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds." "Repent and be converted, every one of you," and you shall receive the two inestimable gifts, both the immediate and irrevocable remission of sins, and the habitual purifying and sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. Receive the truth in the love of it, and you shall be saved. Born of the word and of the Spirit, you will learn from experience what it is to purify your hearts, through the truth, by the Spirit. "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," the exhortation will be addressed to you, and, by the grace of God, not in vain, "to lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings, and, as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" for then ye shall have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Oh, that even now the Lord may give testimony to the word of his grace, and that in the annals of heaven it may be recorded, that this man and that man were born, now and here, and that many who entered within these walls "dead in trespasses and sins," may depart "written among the living in Jerusalem." [2]

III.—MOTIVES ENFORCING THE EXHORTATION.

§ 1.—*Motives from the State and Character of Christians.*

I come now to the third question, What are the motives by which this exhortation is enforced? These are presented in two different forms? They are either folded up in the connective particle "Wherefore," or lie unfolded in the statement, "Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Let us look at them in their order, and open not merely our minds to apprehend their meaning, but our hearts to feel their force.

Let us then inquire, What are the motives to "lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings," and to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby,"

[1] Phil. ii. 16. 2 Cor. iv. 2; ii. 17. Col. i. 28. Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

[2] John vi. 63; xi. 25. Eph. v. 14. Mark i. 15. Acts iii. 19. 2 Thess. ii. 10. Rom. xii. 2. Isa. iv. 3.

that are folded up in the connective particle "Wherefore?" This word looks backward to the statements in the 22d and 23d verses of the last chapter: "You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren," and "You have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of the Lord, which liveth and abideth forever;" and forward to the clause, "As new-born babes," which is equivalent to 'being new-born babes.' The meaning of these statements has already been explained. It is their force as motives to the duties here enjoined that we are now to illustrate. The general statement is, "You have lately become the children of God both as to state and character, by the belief of the truth, under the influence of the Holy Spirit." The force of this statement as a source of motives will be made plainer by resolving it into its elements: 'You are as new-born babes; you are the children of God; you are brethren as being the children of God, members of the same family; you became so by obedience to the truth; you became so under the influence of the Spirit.' Every one of these propositions, all of them, evidently included in the statements referred to in the connective term "Wherefore," is instinct with impulsive energy, replete with powerful motives.

(1.) You are little children, lay then aside malignity and craft. These, hateful wherever they appear, are monstrous in an infant. They are quite incongruous with the childlike character that belongs to genuine Christians. Like little children, too, desire growth, and for this purpose desire your appropriate nourishment. It is natural for a child to grow, and to wish to grow. It is unnatural for a child to be stationary, and to have no desire for growth; and so it is with the spiritual babe. The child is born to grow, and has an instinctive desire to grow. A Christian not making progress, not desiring to make progress, is something quite out of the natural course of the spiritual world. And as the mother's milk is the natural, the needful means of nutriment to the infant, so is the pure truth the natural and needful means of progressive holiness to the regenerate soul.

(2.) You are the children of God; you should then be like your Father in heaven, who is infinitely benignant and truthful. If you were malicious, guileful, and envious, would you not falsify your profession of divine sonship? Would you not prove yourself the children of a very different father, even of him who was a murderer and a liar from the beginning? It is the same argument which the Apostle Paul puts so strongly in his Epistle to the Philippians: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless as the sons of God, without rebuke,"[1] and which our Lord urges in a still more forcible form in the Sermon on the Mount: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."[2] It is the same principle of motive as in these words: "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" "Be followers of God

[1] Phil. ii. 15. [2] Matt. v. 44–48.

as dear children."[1] And if you are the children of God, you should desire to grow, for it is thus, thus only, you can honor your Father: "Herein is my Father glorified, in that ye bring forth much fruit"[2]— that is, grow, make rapid progress in holy attainment. And you should desire the sincere milk of the word, you should seek to understand and practically to improve divine truth, for it is the revelation of the mind of your Father. "As obedient children," you should seek to know the will of your Father, that ye may do the will of your Father. He is an unnatural, undutiful child who acts otherwise.

(3.) Then you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and of course form one spiritual brotherhood. This is a new aspect of the statement, full of additional motive to the duties enjoined. There can be no doubt that Christians are not permitted to indulge in "malice, guile, envying, or evil-speaking," in reference to any class of men; but there can be as little, that in the passage before us, there is a direct reference to the conduct of Christians to each other, and that those evil tempers and habits are condemned as opposed to that pure fervent love of the brethren, which had been enjoined in the close of the preceding chapter. The bearing of this consideration, that they are all brethren, on the *dissuasive* exhortation, is direct and powerful. Brothers should treat one another with an ingenuous openness. If there is to be malice or deceit in the family circle, where is true sincerity to dwell? Love one another. Surely malice, deceit, hypocrisies, envyings, and evil-speakings, are peculiarly out of place among those who have *all* been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible:" who have been bound by ties of a brotherhood that neither time nor eternity can dissolve, and who have "purified their souls, through the truth by the Spirit, to the unfeigned love of the brethren." It is substantially the same motive that is brought forward in these exhortations: "Love as brethren. Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, which is the same thing as evil-speaking; lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man, who is corrupt in his deeds; and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him." "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for ye are members one of another."[3] Confraternity, in its very nature, and especially such a confraternity, implies an obligation to kindness and sincerity on the part of the members. This motive also strongly urges to compliance with the *persuasive* exhortation; for spiritual growth is not only necessary to individual happiness, but to the prosperity of the body. The same idea that is expressed by Christians being represented as brethren, is still more strikingly expressed by their being represented as mutually connected as members of one body. The growth of every member is necessary to the welfare of the whole body. The more individual growth, the more general prosperity. It is by every member growing up to him that is the Head, that "the whole body fitly joined maketh increase."[4] It is by becoming wiser, better, and happier myself, that I increase the wisdom, and holiness, and peace, of the body to which I belong.

[1] Eph. v. 1. [2] John xv. 8.
[3] 1 Pet. iii. 8. Col. iii. 9. Eph. iv. 25. [4] Eph. iv. 16.

(4.) Then still farther, you became the children of God, and were formed into a spiritual brotherhood, "by obeying the truth." Wherefore, put away all those evil habits, which can be retained only by disobeying, resisting, the influence of the truth. Every evil temper or action is a practical lie; an implied denial of, and opposition to, the truth; and thus is very inconsistent in those who profess to have submitted to "the truth," to have received it into their hearts as the animating, regulating principle of their souls. And as it was by the influence of the truth you were made holy, so it is by the continued, increased influence of the truth, that you are to continue holy, to become more and more holy. Therefore, "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

(5.) Finally here, you became the children of God under the influence of the Spirit; therefore, you should put off "malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and all those other evil tempers and habits; for these are the fruits, not of the Spirit, but of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit is in all "goodness"—benignity, "righteousness, and truth." You would "grieve the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," if you "put not away from you all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor, and evil-speaking, with all malice." "If ye live in the Spirit, see that ye walk in the Spirit." And therefore, too, should you desire the sincere milk of the word; for it is by the word, understood and believed, that the Spirit carries on his sanctifying work. It is presumptuous folly to expect to be sanctified or guided by the Spirit, without the word. The Spirit leads to the word; and it is through the word that he enables us to "put off the old man who is corrupt in his deeds, and put on the new man, who, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."[1] Such are the variety and force of appropriate motive which is folded up in the connective particle "wherefore," with which our text commences.

§ 2.—*Motives from having tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

Let us now examine the motive which is unfolded in the statement with which our text closes. "If so be," or rather, seeing "ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." There can be no doubt that the ordinary usage of the language favors the rendering of our version, "If so be." If it be admitted, the meaning is, If you have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, you are peculiarly bound to "lay aside those evil habits," and to "desire the sincere milk of the world;" and if you do not lay them aside, and desire the sincere milk, then it is a plain proof that, whatever profession you make, you have not "tasted that the Lord is gracious." The particle, however, admits of being rendered "since," taking for granted, not throwing into doubt, their having "tasted that the Lord is gracious." It is the same word that in 2 Thess. i. 6, is rendered, and with obvious propriety, "seeing." "We glory in you, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations which you endure; a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the

[1] Eph. v. 9; iv. 30, 31. Gal. v. 25.

kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: *seeing* it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them who trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us."[1] This mode of rendering the particle here, better accords with the whole strain of the epistle, in which the persons addressed are always spoken of as Christians, and gives greater point and directness to the motives, "Lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and "desire the sincere milk of the word, since ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

To bring out the force of the motive, it is necessary to inquire, Who is meant by "the Lord?" What is meant by his being gracious? What is meant by tasting that he is gracious? And then, How the having tasted that the Lord is gracious, affords grounds for the exhortations, "Lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and "desire the sincere milk of the word?"

(1.) "The Lord" here is plainly the Lord Jesus. This is evident from what follows: for without doubt he is "the living stone" on whom, as a foundation, Christians, "as living stones, are builded into a holy temple." It is to him that the passage cited from the prophet Isaiah certainly refers.

(2.) Our Lord Jesus is "gracious," is kind. Benignity, holy love, is his leading moral attribute. His kindness is manifested in what he does, and in what he gives. "The grace" or kindness "of our Lord Jesus" is shown in that, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."[2] He bestows on man, utterly undeserving of anything but punishment, true knowledge, pardon, restoration to the divine favor, peace, holiness, abundant consolation, good hope, eternal life; in one word, happiness, perfection, suited to all the capacities of his nature, during the eternity of his being. And that he might do this, He who was in the form of God assumed the nature of man, the form of a servant, the likeness of a sinner; bore our sins, carried our sorrows; became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. "Herein is love." This is kindness. Verily, the Lord is gracious.[3]

(3.) To "taste" that the Lord is gracious, is a figurative expression. It seems borrowed from the words of the Psalmist, "O taste and see that God is good,"[4] where two of the bodily senses are employed to denote clear mental apprehension, along with appropriate mental affection. To taste that the Lord is gracious, is to know that the Lord is gracious; and to know this, not from the report of others, but from your own experience. This knowledge is derived primarily from the faith of the truth as to what the Lord is, and has proved himself to be, by his gifts; and secondarily, from the enjoyment of these gifts of his, on the possession of which we enter by the belief of this truth; and the measure of which enjoyment corresponds to the measure of our faith. He tastes that the Lord is gracious, who

[1] This seems also the force of εἴπερ in Rom. viii. 9. Such a use of εἴπερ can be supported by classical usage. Τὸ τύπτεσθαι ἀλγεινόν, εἴπερ σαρκινοί. "To be struck is painful" *to men*, "*since* they are made of flesh;" *i. e.* not of dead matter.—ARISTOT. Eth. Nic. iii. 9.

[2] 2 Cor. viii. 9. [3] Phil. ii. 6–8. [4] Psal. xxxiv. 8.

believes the love which the Lord has to sinful men; who counts it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that he came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many; to save sinners, even the chief; and he tastes the graciousness, the kindness of our Lord, who, in the faith of this truth, has peace with God; has access to him; holy love; fervent gratitude; good hope; joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he has received the reconciliation.[1] Every believer of the truth thus tastes that the Lord is gracious; and he does so just in the measure of his faith. The man who does not know Christ to be kind, and his benefits to be precious, is not a believer; and he who does so, cannot, but in the degree in which he is a believer, trust in Christ as his Saviour, and rejoice in the benefits of his salvation. "That is to taste," says Luther, "when I with the heart believe that Christ has been sent for me, and is become mine own; that my miseries are his and his life mine; when this truth enters into the heart, then it is tasted."[2]

It has been supposed by some, that the term is intended to intimate, not only that they have a true personal knowledge of Christ's kindness, but that that knowledge was as yet but very imperfect. They had tasted, but only *tasted*. They know, but they know but little, of that love that passeth knowledge. No doubt this is a truth; but we should hesitate to say it was in the apostle's mind when he used the words now before us.

(4.) It only remains that I endeavor to bring out the force of the motive to "lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings," and to "desire the sincere milk of the word;" which is afforded by the fact, that Christians have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." The love of God in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world to himself, known and believed, is the grand source of motive to holy obedience in all its forms. "The grace of God," of which the kindness of the Lord is an expression, "which brings salvation to all," when the divine testimony regarding it is understood and believed, "teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "When the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man (his philanthropy) appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." It is this faithful saying respecting the kindness of the Lord, firmly believed, that makes men "careful to maintain good works." It is "the mercies of God" through Christ, known and believed, that induce men to "present their bodies living sacrifices, holy

[1] 1 John iv. 16. John i. 16. 1 Tim. i. 15. Rom. v. 1–11.

[2] Χρηστὸς ὁ Κύριος. Dulcis est Dominus in contemplatione, ad meditandum, Cant. ii. 3; in aure spirituali ad audiendum, Cant. v. 13; in ore ad loquendum, Psal. cxix. 39; in prospectu ad videndum, Sir. xxiii. 27.—Jo. Hus.

and acceptable unto God: rational worship;" and to be "not conformed to this present world; but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, so as to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."[1]

1. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, "Lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings." "Sure if you have tasted of that kindness and sweetness of God in Christ, it will compose your spirits and conform you to him; it will diffuse such a sweetness through your soul, that there will be no place for malice and guile. There will be nothing but love, and meekness, and singleness of heart. They that have bitter malicious spirits, evidence that they have not tasted that the Lord is gracious; for they who have done so, cannot but, in the degree in which they have done so, 'be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them.'"[2]

2. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." It was in the word that you tasted the Lord was gracious. And is not this a powerful motive to go back to the word, that again, and again, and again, you may "taste and see that God is good;" and thus grow holier and happier, "keeping yourselves in the love of God, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, and looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus, unto eternal life."[3]

I cannot conclude the illustration of this point in more appropriate words than in those of the pious Archbishop, a man who always makes it evident that "he spoke what he knew, and testified what he had seen and tasted," when he spoke on such themes as these: "This is the sweetness of the word, that it has the Lord's graciousness in it; it gives us the knowledge of his love. This they find who have spiritual life and senses exercised to discern good and evil; and this engages a Christian to a further desire of the word. They are fantastical, delusive tastes, that draw men from the written word, and make them expect other revelations. This graciousness is first conveyed to us by the word when we taste it, and, therefore, there still we are to seek it; to hang upon those breasts which cannot be drawn dry. There, the love of God in Christ springs forth in the several promises. The heart that cleaves to the word of God, and delights in it, cannot but find in it daily new tastes of his goodness. There it reads true love, and by that stirs up its own to him, and so grows and loves every day more than the former, and thus is tending from tastes to fulness. It is but little we can receive here—some drops of joy that enter into us; but there we shall enter into joy as vessels put into a sea of happiness."

There is a question which here presses for an answer from the conscience of every individual who now hears me. Have I tasted that the Lord is gracious? Do I know, experimentally "know, the grace of our Lord Jesus?" You have all often heard of his grace; but have you tasted it? Have you believed his kindness? Have you enjoyed his benefits? The most satisfying evidence of this is, the lay-

[1] Tit. ii. 12–14; iii. 4–8. Rom. xii. 1–3.
[2] Eph. iv. 32. Leighton. [3] Jude 20, 21.

ing aside all malice and similar tempers, and the desiring the sincere milk of the word. This indeed is the only permanently satisfactory evidence; for there is a dead faith, a presumptuous hope, a false peace. If you really have believed the love of Christ to you, that faith will "work by love" to God, to Christ, to the brethren, to all mankind, and it will "overcome the world." If the hope you cherish is founded on that faith, it will lead you to "purify yourselves as he is pure." If your peace rests on his finished work, it will keep your mind, and fortify it against the assaults of your spiritual enemies.

I trust not a few of this audience have tasted, are tasting, that the Lord is gracious. Let them bless the sovereign grace that made them partakers of this distinguishing blessing, opening their blinded eyes, and restoring soundness to their diseased taste. Let them seek new and more abundant discoveries of the graciousness of the Lord, and let them seek these in his word, and by his word. In his word let them seek discoveries of his kindness; by his word let them seek the enjoyment of his benefits. Let them open their mouths wide, and he will fill them "with the finest of the wheat," "angel's food," "meat which the world knoweth not of;" "the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, who came down from heaven that he might give life to the world, meat indeed, drink indeed." And let them look forward with earnest expectation and humble hope to the manifestation of his grace, to the communication of his benefits, which is to be made "at his appearing and glory," when they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house, and shall be made to drink of the river of his pleasures, "with whom is the fountain of life," and "in whose light they shall see light clearly." [1] Thus shall "they know," and ever "follow on to know, the loving-kindness of the Lord."

But what shall I say to those who, I am afraid, form not a small class in the audience,—to those who have never tasted that the Lord is gracious? I might express wonder at their infatuation, blame their pertinacity, pity their folly, and bewail their misery. I might ask, how is it, when the Lord is gracious, so gracious, when the revelation made of his grace is so plain and so well accredited, and when the blessings of his salvation are so suited to your circumstances, and so kindly urged on your acceptance, that you remain experimentally as much strangers to a sense of his kindness, and to the value of his salvation, as if he were not gracious, or as if you did not need, or were excluded from tasting, his grace? But I choose rather to content myself with proclaiming with the Psalmist, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." The Lord is good and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy, rich in grace, ready to pardon, mighty to save. "Behold HIM, behold HIM." Look, look to Jesus, obeying, suffering, dying, the just in the room of the unjust, rising, ascending, sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, giving gifts, the gifts of pardon and peace, and holiness and salvation to men, even to the rebellious, to you, and then say if the Lord is not gracious. "Herein is LOVE, not that you loved him, but that he loved you;" loved you, so as to "give himself" for you on the cross; loved you, so as to give himself to you in the gospel. And is all this love to be slighted

[1] Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9.

and despised? Ah! if you *will* not taste his *grace*, you *must* feel his *wrath*. "Be wise, be instructed; kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled but a little. Blessed," only blessed, truly blessed, eternally blessed, "are they who trust in him."[1]

Thus have we filled up the outline sketched on our entering on the consideration of the subject. Our labor and your time have been lost, worse than lost, if they do not lead to practical results. It is to worse than no purpose that we better understand the meaning, that we more clearly perceive the obligation, of the divine exhortation, if we do not set about complying with it. It increases responsibility and deepens guilt. If henceforth we cherish malignant feeling, and neglect the study of divine truth as the great means of spiritual improvement, we do so at an increased peril. Oh that the divine energy may accompany these statements; so that, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, all of us may desire the sincere milk of the word, and thus give satisfactory evidence that we have indeed tasted that "the Lord is gracious!" Amen and Amen.

[1] 1 John iv. 10. Psal. ii. 10–12.

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGES OF CHRISTIANS, AND HOW THEY OBTAIN THEM.

1 Pet. ii. 4–10.—To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

To unfold the nature and illustrate the value of the numerous "exceeding great and precious" privileges, which the peculiar people of God have in present possession, and in certain expectation, is one of the most important, as it is one of the most delightful, duties of the public christian instructor. Such illustrations are calculated to serve many valuable purposes. They honor the Saviour, from whom all these privileges are derived, by displaying the ardor and tenderness of his love, the efficacy and value of his sacrifice, the prevalence of his intercession, and the munificence of his liberality. They tend to the conversion of sinners, by showing them that it is their obvious interest, as well as their undoubted duty, to yield to the claims of the Saviour's authority and love; and they greatly conduce to the consolation and joy of the saints, by fixing their attention on the number, and variety, and value, and security, of their distinguishing blessings; and to their holiness, by calling forth into vigorous, sustained exercise, that gratitude for these unspeakable gifts, which is the most powerful stimulant to christian obedience. The more accurately the Christian apprehends the intrinsic excellence, the more fully he appreciates the inestimable worth, of his privileges, the more deeply must he feel his obligations to him, to whose sovereign love he is indebted for them all; and the more readily will he embrace every opportunity of manifesting his sense of this kindness, by actively doing, and patiently suffering, his will.

From these remarks it is obvious, on the one hand, that an enlightened preacher of christian privilege is one of the best friends of practical religion; and on the other, that the public christian instructor who confines himself exclusively to what may be termed the moral

part of Christianity, neglects the principal means with which that divine system furnishes us, for reclaiming the vicious and improving the pious, for converting the sinner and edifying the saint, for making the bad good, and the good better.

Such plainly were the views of the Apostle Peter, who in that epistle, of which our text forms a part, insists largely on the peculiar privileges of Christians, representing them as at once a perennial, exuberant source of abundant consolation and good hope, amid all the trials and afflictions of the present state, and an inexhaustible store of, to a christian mind, irresistible motive to perseverance and activity in the discharge of all the varied obligations of religious and moral duty. One of those exhibitions of christian privilege, obviously brought forward as intended and calculated to serve these practical purposes, lies before us in the interesting and beautiful, though highly figurative and somewhat complicated, paragraph which we have chosen as the subject of this discourse.

At first view, the paragraph may appear, to a considerable degree, disjointed, and on that account obscure; but on a closer inspection we shall find it to be just a beautiful expansion and illustration of the sentiment stated in the words which immediately precede it, and which constitutes one of the apostle's powerful enforcements of the duties, with the affectionate injunction of which this chapter of the epistle commences: "Ye," Christians, "have tasted that the Lord," that is, your Lord Jesus Christ, "is gracious," kind. You have obtained, you enjoy, important, invaluable, blessings in consequence of your connection with him. What these are the apostle states in our text.

In consequence of coming to him, they had been brought by him to God, his Father and their Father. From a state of alienation from God, a state necessarily of deep degradation and misery, they had been brought into a state of most intimate relation to God, a state necessarily of the highest honor and the richest felicity. This is the leading idea: but it is brought out by a variety of figures borrowed from the facts of the Jewish economy, peculiarly calculated to be interesting and instructive to those to whom the epistle was originally addressed.

By becoming connected with him, they had become, in one point of view, constituent parts of a great spiritual temple, infinitely more glorious than the temple at Jerusalem; and in another point of view, ministering priests in that temple, possessed of a more dignified office, and engaged in holier services, than Aaron or any of his sons. They had become the true circumcision, the spiritual Israel, the possessors of those spiritual privileges of which the external advantages of Israel, according to the flesh, were but the imperfect figures; they had become in a sense far superior to that in which their fathers had ever been, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, the people of God," the objects of his distinguishing love, his sovereign choice, his most complacential delight. Having come to Christ, the living stone, the divinely appointed and the divinely qualified foundation of the great spiritual temple, they had, from union to him, become living stones, fit materials for the sacred spiritual edifice; and on him they had been built up, made a

part of his mystical building, become devoted to the rational service of the great Father of Spirits; a sentiment repeated under the plainer figure of their having been constituted "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus."

The apostle, according to his manner, seeks in the writings of the Old Testament, illustration both of the privileges, in the enjoyment of which those to whom he wrote had the evidence in themselves that the Lord is gracious, and of the manner in which they had obtained these privileges by that spiritual connection with Him, which rises out of the faith of the truth. The prophet Isaiah, in the 28th chapter of his prophecies, in an oracle plainly belonging to the time of the Messiah, uses these words: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." The apostle quotes this passage apparently from memory, as his citation does not verbally correspond either with the Hebrew text or the Greek translation, though it accurately enough expresses the common meaning of both. 'In your experience,' as if the apostle had said, 'this glorious prediction has been fulfilled, "He that believeth shall not be ashamed," that is, he shall have no reason to be ashamed. Not shame, but honor shall be his portion. He who, by believing in the sure foundation, is built up on him, shall not be ashamed, he shall be honored. "To you, then, who believe, there is," according to this ancient oracle, "honor" (for this is the literal meaning of the words rendered, not very happily, "To you who believe he is precious;" a very delightful truth, no doubt, but a truth which the words do not naturally signify, and which has no direct bearing on the obvious object of the whole paragraph). "To you, then, who believe, there is honor, but to them who believe not, or are disobedient," there is shame and ruin; for "the stone which they as builders reject, is," notwithstanding their rejection, "made the head of the corner."[1] And more than this, "this stone," which to them who build on it is honor and security, to them rejecting it "is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence," an occasion of their stumbling and falling, and being broken to pieces; a doom long ago denounced against them, appointed for them, as disobedient—as appears from the ancient oracle referred to in the 8th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, verses 14, 15. But while thus, to these unbelieving disobedient ones, not building on, but stumbling at, this foundation, there is shame and ruin, to you who by believing build on it, there is honor; for, in consequence of your connection with this living stone, ye are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye may show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

The coherence of the passage is now, I trust, quite evident, as well as the bearing of every part of it, on the illustration of the gen-

[1] The construction is *ἀνακόλουθον*. It is equivalent to *λίθος ὄντος ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες, οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας*—just as 1 Cor. x. 16. *Τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν οὐχὶ κοινωνία. κ. τ. λ.* for *οὐχὶ ὁ ἄρτος ὃν κλῶμεν. κ. τ. λ.*

eral thesis, "Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." In the privileges which you possess, so inestimably valuable and dignifying, you have abundant experimental proof that the Lord is kind.

We are prepared now for entering on a somewhat more particular consideration of this view of the peculiar privileges of Christians, as a manifestation of the Lord's kindness to them; and I do not know that the whole truth can be brought before our minds more fully and impressively, than by attending in succession—I. To the view which the text gives us of their degraded and unhappy state previously to their obtaining these privileges. II. To the manner in which they obtained them; by coming to Christ as the divinely laid foundation. III. To the dignified and happy state in which, as Christians, they are placed. And, IV. To the disgrace and ruin of those who refuse these privileges, by neglecting the only way in which they can be obtained. This will bring before our minds all the truth contained in the passage, and will bring it before our minds as all intended to bear on this one point,—the manifestation of the Saviour's kindness, which his people possess in the distinguishing privileges which he bestows on them.

I.—THE DEGRADED AND MISERABLE CONDITION OF CHRISTIANS PREVIOUSLY TO THEIR OBTAINING THEIR PECULIAR PRIVILEGES.

Let us first, then, attend to the view which the text gives us of the state of Christians previously to their connection with Christ, as a means of throwing light on the statement, "Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The degree of kindness manifested in conferring certain privileges, is materially affected by the state in which the object of kindness and the subject of privilege was, previously to these privileges being bestowed. The giving of a higher degree of nobility to one already noble, is a very different favor, a very different manifestation of kindness, on the part of a prince, from the giving of the same, or even an inferior degree of honor, to a peasant or a slave. To form a just idea of the graciousness of the Lord towards his peculiar people, we must keep steadily in view the state in which his grace finds them. That state is here presented to our minds, in contrast with the state into which that grace has brought them. It has made them "living stones" who were "dead stones." It has brought them into marvellous light who were in darkness. It has made those the people of God who were not a people, not the people of God. It has bestowed mercy on those who had not obtained mercy. Dead stones; in darkness; not a people; not the people of God; not having obtained mercy;—these are the images under which the inspired writer describes the original state of those who now have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Let us inquire into their meaning.

§ 1.—*They were "dead stones."*

They were not lively, or rather living stones; they were "dead stones." The language here is so boldly metaphorical that, to our

cold occidental imaginations, it is apt to appear harsh and unnatural. Yet it is not obscure, and is a very striking expression of a very important truth. The christian church is represented under the figure of a temple, an edifice intended to indicate the presence and promote the glory of the divinity. This is a spiritual, living temple, far more worthy of the spiritual living God than any material building. Of this living temple, Jesus Christ is the living foundation. That a body of men are fitted for indicating the presence, and promoting the honor, of the only living and true God, is entirely owing to their relation to Jesus Christ, to their personal interest in the saving efficacy of his mediation; and all who, through this personal interest in these saving effects, are transformed by the renewing of their minds, are living stones, fit materials for forming part of such a spiritual edifice.

But this is not a natural, it is a supernatural state. The living stones were once "dead stones." That is, they were utterly unfit for forming a part of the living temple; of the true Church of God. They were "without God" in the world, "alienated from the life of God." "They did not like to retain him in their knowledge." "He was not in all their thoughts." God was not in them by his sanctifying Spirit. The language of their hearts was, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Looking at such a man, or at a collection of such men, surveying their habitual character and conduct, the heaven-enlightened observer says, No, this is not the living temple of the living God. This is not "the house of God," this is not "the gate of heaven." This is "the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit." And as they give no indication of God's presence in them, they are quite unfit for promoting his honor. Such men, such bodies of men, while they continue unchanged, cannot worship or glorify God. They are little disposed usually to engage in acts of worship; and when they do engage in them, to employ the prophet's phraseology, it is rather "howling" than "praying," a dead oblation, not a living sacrifice." [1]

Such were some, such were all, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To them all it may be said, though in a different sense from that in which the prophet uses the words, "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged," or, in the words of the apostle, "Remember, that ye were in times past in the flesh; without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:" utterly unqualified, utterly indisposed, for intercourse and fellowship with God; not knowing God, not wishing to know him; altogether unfit for making him known. [2]

§ 2.—*They were in "darkness."*

A second view of the original state of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious is, that they "were in darkness." Darkness is an emblem of ignorance, error, depravity, and misery; and in all the extent of significance which belongs to the emblem, the persons here referred to were in darkness. All men by nature are under the in-

[1] Hos. vii. 17. [2] Isa. li. 1. Eph. ii. 11, 12.

fluence of ignorance and misapprehension of the true character of God, and this necessarily involves ignorance and misapprehension of every subject which it is of most importance for man to be rightly and thoroughly informed on. "They know not, neither do they understand; they go on in darkness." [1]

This ignorance and error are naturally connected with moral depravity. As truth and holiness, so ignorance, error, and depravity go together. Men are "alienated from the life of God, by the ignorance that is in them." Instead of serving the God who is light, they serve the prince of darkness. Their works are "the unfruitful works of darkness." [2]

And as their state was one of ignorance, error, and sin, it was also one of misery. They were strangers to "the light of life." The light of God's countenance did not shine on them. They were destitute of "his favor, which is life; of his loving-kindness, which is better than life." [3]

§ 3.—*They were "not the people of God."*

A third view given of the previous state of those who had tasted that the Lord was gracious is, that "they were not a people," "not the people of God." The former views respect Christians in their previous state individually, this seems rather to refer to them as a body.

They were not "the people of God." They did not belong to the holy society. They were "aliens from the commonwealth of" the spiritual "Israel." They were equally destitute of the character and the privileges of God's peculiar people. Instead of sitting with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, they were "without, in outer darkness," lying under the power of the wicked one, the prince of darkness.

They were not, properly speaking, at all "a people;" they were so base and miserable as not to deserve the name of "a people." Men in their natural state are incapable of the highest form of social relation, that of being members of the holy commonwealth, subjects of the heavenly kingdom. They are rather a herd of outlaws, a band of rebels, than a properly organized "people."

§ 4.—*They had "not obtained mercy."*

The last view given us of the previous state of Christians is, that they "had not obtained mercy." The meaning of that is not, that they were not the objects of the benevolence or of the saving purpose of God. "The tender mercy of God is over all his works." [4] God has a love to *man*,[5] guilty, depraved, righteously-condemned, self-ruined man; and this love to man appears, not, first, when man, by believing the truth, and being transformed in the renewing of his mind, becomes, in the degree in which he is so, the proper object of the divine moral approbation and complacential delight; but "herein God manifested and commended his love to us, in that, while we were

[1] Psal. lxxxii. 5. [2] Eph. iv. 18; v. 11. [3] John viii. 12. Psal. xxx. 5; lxiii. 3.
[4] Psal. cxlv. 9. [5] Ἡ φιλανθρωπία. Tit. iii. 4.

yet sinners, enemies, Christ died for us;" and as to all who ever taste that the Lord is gracious, there can be no doubt that he "loved them with an everlasting love, *therefore* with loving-kindness does he draw them" to himself. Yes, when God "blesses them with heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ," it is in accordance with, and in consequence of, his having "chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, having in love predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, and to the praise of the glory of his grace."[1]

The meaning is not, that they were not the objects of divine love, but that they were not the subjects of divine saving benefits. They were the objects equally of his judicial displeasure, and of his moral disapprobation. They were not blessed by him with any heavenly blessing. They were unpardoned, unjustified, unsanctified. They were "poor and miserable, blind and naked." They were in a state, in which, if they had continued, they must have been miserable forever. For such persons to be made to taste that the Lord was gracious, was mercy indeed, mercy which should have a constraining power to make them most dutiful subjects of their gracious Lord.

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRISTIANS OBTAIN THEIR PECULIAR PRIVILEGES; BY FAITH OF THE TRUTH, AND RELIANCE ON THE SAVIOUR.

Let us now turn our attention, for a little, to the view the text gives us of the manner in which those miserable beings became possessed of their peculiar privileges; to the immediate cause of so favorable a change in their state and circumstances. It was by "coming to Christ as a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious;" it was by "believing on Him," as "the chief corner-stone, elect, which God had laid in Sion."

To believe on Christ as the chief corner-stone, and to come to him as the living stone, have generally been understood as synonymous expressions, and both have been viewed as significant of that faith which, by the constitution of the new covenant, is necessarily connected with the enjoyment of the blessings of the christian salvation; and the passage, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, he that believeth on me shall never thirst,"[2] has often been quoted as clearly proving this. I apprehend that that passage merely proves, that "he that cometh to Christ," and "he that believeth on him," are two descriptions of the same person, not that they are expressions entirely synonymous in meaning. The following passage seems, indeed, clearly to distinguish between believing on, and coming to, and to represent the latter as the consequence of the former, the former as the means of the latter, "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all who diligently seek him."[3] To believe, is to count a proposition true on the ground of what appears satisfactory testimony; to believe *on*, or *in* a person, is a Hebraistic mode of expression, and signifies to count a testimony, given either by or respecting that person, to be true; to believe in Christ, is to

[1] Rom. v. 8. Eph. i. 3–6. [2] John vi. 35. [3] Heb. xi. 6.

count true what Christ says, or what is said about Christ; to know and be sure of it, to reckon it a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.[1] To come to Christ is a figurative expression, denoting those mental exercises which may be termed the movement of the mind and heart towards Christ, in the various characters in which the divine testimony represents him, and which equally, by the constitution of human nature and of the new covenant, grow out of the faith of the truth respecting him, of which the bodily movement of coming is a natural figurative representation. The peculiar character of the mental movement, depends on the view at the time before the mind respecting Christ. Believing the truth respecting him as the great Prophet, I come to him seeking the knowledge of his will, with a determination to receive any doctrine, every doctrine, which he delivers, just because he delivers it. Believing the truth with respect to him as a Priest, I come to him relying with undivided, unshaken confidence on his atonement and intercession. Believing the truth with respect to him as a King, I come to him in a cheerful unquestioning obedience to his commands and appointments, just because they are his. This exactly accords with the view given in our excellent Shorter Catechism, which teaches us, not that faith is receiving and resting on Jesus Christ for salvation, but "that faith is that by which we receive and rest on Christ;" and in the Confession of Faith, which teaches us, "that it is by faith that we accept and rest on Christ, yield obedience to the commands, tremble at the threatenings, and embrace the promises, of God."[2]

It was, then, by believing the truth about Christ, and by those outgoings of the mind and heart to him that necessarily grow out of this faith, that the Christians to whom Peter wrote obtained, and retained, possession of the high honors and privileges which are here enumerated. It was thus that not shame but honor was their portion, that they became living stones, that they were built up, on him the living foundation, a spiritual house, that they became a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a holy nation, partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, a people, the people of God, partakers of distinguishing saving blessings. This is just the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, which meets us everywhere in the Bible; that it is by the faith of the truth as it is in Jesus, that individuals obtain personal possession of the blessings of the christian salvation.

Let us look a little more closely at this interesting view of the faith of the gospel, and its immediate and necessary effects. Those to whom Peter wrote, had believed on, and come to, the Lord. What they believed, and how they came to him, will appear very plain on examining the passage before us. What they believed was, that Jesus Christ was indeed "a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; the chief corner-stone laid by God in Sion, elect, precious;" and that every man thus believing may rest satisfied that he shall not be ashamed by the disappointment of his hopes. And, believing this, they had come to him as the divinely appointed and divinely qualified foundation; they had exercised hope

[1] *Vide* "Hints on Faith and Hope."
[2] Westminster Short. Cat. Q. 86. Confession of Faith, Ch. xiv. sect. 2.

and confidence in him; they had built their creed on him; they had rested their expectations of eternal life on him; they had submitted to him as their only Lord and King.

There is some difficulty in forming a clear, distinct idea of the principal figurative representation here used, in which Christ is compared to a stone,[1] a living stone, a chief corner-stone, elect, precious. There can be no doubt that the apostle had before his mind the following passages of Scripture: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner; this is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes;" "He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel: for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and taken;" and, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste."[2]

It is sufficiently obvious that the general representation is, 'Jesus Christ is the foundation of a spiritual temple, of which believers in him form the superstructure. He is the foundation, they are stones built on the foundation.' Whatever the meaning of this may be, so far the figurative expression is distinct enough; but what are we to make of the ephitet "living," applied both to the foundation and to the superstructure? He is the "living stone," they are "living stones.' It seems impossible satisfactorily to account for our translators having rendered the same word living in the first instance, and lively in the second. Some have supposed that, in these expressions, there is an allusion to the undoubted fact, that the ancients were in the habit of speaking of stone in its native state, lying compact, unbroken in its original place in the earth, as the living rock.[3] Jesus Christ, according to this view of the matter, is compared to a mighty rock, resting in the place where the omnipotent hand of God placed it, when "by his power he set fast the mountains, being girded with power," affording an immovable foundation, very different from any stone, however large, which the hand of man could lay; and when it is said that believers are built upon him as living stones, the idea intended to be conveyed is the closeness and indissolubleness of their connection with him; they form, as it were, a part of the living rock; so intimately connected are they, that they cannot be disjoined either from the foundation, or from one another.

This is certainly ingenious, but we doubt if it be the apostle's reference. The epithet "living," in reference to the foundation, and the stones built on it, like the epithet "spiritual," in reference to the house or temple, seems to belong not to the figurative representation, but to the exposition of it, just as in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the epithet "living" is connected with sacrifice; and "reasonable" or rational with "worship," religious service. The epithets are intended to indicate that the temple spoken of, is a temple

[1] "Hærebat animo Petri cognomen ipsi a Domino datum: hinc varié ad id alludit non modo *Lapidis* vocabulo, Acts iv. 11, sed etiam frequenti firmitudinis mentione."—BENGEL.

[2] Psal. cxviii. 22. Isa. viii. 14; xxviiii. 16. [3] See note A.

worthy of him who cannot "dwell in temples made with hands;" a living temple for the living God: a spiritual temple for God who is a spirit. Its foundation is a living foundation; the stones of which it is composed are living stones. Considering this as the true interpretation of the phraseology, let us now inquire what are the great truths respecting Christ contained in this figurative phraseology, the belief of which is represented as that by which the Christians, whom Peter was addressing, had obtained possession of their high and distinguishing privileges.

The great principle is, 'Jesus Christ is the foundation of the spiritual temple of God;' this is the central statement: Then, 'this foundation has been laid by God; it is a chief corner-stone; it is elect or chosen; it is precious; it was disallowed of men, but by God it is made to serve the purpose for which it was intended; and this foundation is a living stone;'—these are the subsidiary statements which cluster round that central one. Let us endeavor to ascertain their meaning, and, if I mistake not, we shall find that they contain a very full and striking statement of the gospel of our salvation.

Jesus Christ is the foundation, the sole foundation, of the spiritual temple of God.[1] What that temple is, there is no room to doubt. It is true Christians, viewed as connected with Christ, and with each other, through their common connection with him. It is this holy society, viewed as the residence of God, and as the grand means of promoting his glory in the world. These are the purposes of a temple. It is the Deity's house; and it is the medium by which he is known and honored among men. Now, keeping this in view, it will not be difficult to see what is meant by Christ's being the foundation of this spiritual temple. It is just this, that it is by connection with him that Christians, either individually or collectively, are fitted to serve the purposes of a temple; to be a residence for God, and the means of showing forth his glory among mankind. In his original state, man was fitted and designed to be a temple of God; and the race, had man retained his primeval innocence, would have been, as it were, one magnificent temple, "formed for himself to show forth his praise." This was the pre-eminent glory of man among all terrestrial creatures, that he was "formed for God's self;" "capable of and full of God;" sacred in a peculiar way to the Divinity; his chosen habitation, the mansion and residence of his indwelling glory. But by sin man individually and collectively has become unfit for the purpose of a temple. He has brought on himself the divine curse; the necessary effect of which is the withdrawing of the divine gracious presence. He has become unworthy of, in a moral sense unfit for, being the dwelling-place of God.

The consequences of sin in unfitting human nature to be a temple for God, have been so strikingly described by one of the greatest of our divines, that I gladly borrow his language: "What could be expected on all this, but that man should be forsaken of God; that the blessed presence that had been so spitefully slighted, should be withdrawn, to return no more? No more until, at least, a recompense

[1] "Christus est vera et prima Ecclesiæ petra; a quo Petrus, et ceteri fideles fiunt petræ.—CORNELIUS A LAPIDE.

should be made for the wrong done, and a capacity be recovered for his future converse: namely, till both his honor should be repaired and his temple; until he might again honorably return, and be fitly received. But who could have thought in what way these things should ever be brought to pass? that is, neither could his departure be but expected, nor his return but be above all expectation. To depart was what became him; a thing, as the case was, most godlike or worthy of God, and what he owed to himself. It was meet, so great a Majesty having been so condescendingly gracious, should not be also cheap, or appear inapprehensive of being neglected and set at naught. It became him, as the self-sufficient Being, to let it be seen that he designed not man his temple for want of a house; that having of old inhabited his own eternity, and having now 'the heavens for his throne, the earth his footstool,' he could dwell alone, or where he pleased else, in all his great creation, and did not need, where he was not desired. It was becoming of his pure and glorious holiness not to dwell amidst impurities, or let it be thought that he was a God who took pleasure in wickedness: and most suitable to his equal justice to let them who said to him 'Depart from us,' feel they spake that word against their own life and soul; and that what was their rash and wilful choice, is their heaviest doom and punishment. It was only strange that when he left his temple he did not consume it; and that, not leaving it without being basely expelled, he had thought of returning without being invited back again." [1]

Of this new and more glorious restored temple, formed of human beings, in which Jehovah is to dwell forever, Jesus Christ, the only begotten of God, is the foundation and chief corner-stone. It required such a foundation. "The indignity offered to the majesty of the Most High God, in his most ignominious expulsion from his own temple, was to be recompensed; and the ruin must be repaired which had befallen the temple itself. In reference to both these performances, it was determined that Immanuel, that is, his own Son, his substantial image, the brightness of his glory, the eternal Word, should become incarnate; and being so, should undertake several parts, and in distinct capacities, and be at once a single temple himself; and that this temple should also be a sacrifice, and thereby give rise to a manifold temple, conformed to that original one, of each whereof, in the virtue of his sacrifice, he was himself to be the glorious pattern, the firm foundation, the magnificent founder, and the most curious architect and framer, by his own various and most peculiar influence." [2]

It is Jesus Christ who, by his sacrifice, and intercession, and Spirit, and word, and providence, makes individual men fit residences for the Holy Divinity: and it is Jesus Christ also who renders these men united into a holy society, the effectual means of promoting his glory. It is IN HIM, that is, united to him, as the great corner-stone of the foundation, that "all the building fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord." It is as united to him, that the individual members of the Church "are builded together for a habitation of God

[1] HOWE. The best thoughts in these paragraphs are borrowed from that wonderful book, "The Living Temple."

[2] Howe.

in the Spirit." Or, to vary the figure, "He is the head, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."[1]

This, then, is the great central truth. 'Jesus Christ is the foundation of the spiritual temple.' Through him, we are reconciled to God; through him, we are conformed to God. It becomes, through his atonement, congruous, that God should dwell in us, as his temple; and, by his Spirit, we are fitted to be the means of proclaiming his name, and manifesting his glory, to men and to angels; for "by the Church is made known, to principalities and powers, the manifold wisdom of God."[2] He is "the author of salvation," THE SAVIOUR.

How different is the religion of the New Testament from the religion of many who profess to believe it! In the religion of many self-called Christians, there is but a very unfrequent and indirect reference to Christ. While they profess to believe all the doctrines of the New Testament relative to his person and mission, and would be shocked to be considered as enemies to his divinity or atonement, they have no deep abiding views of the importance of these truths to their own hope, holiness, comfort, and salvation. They have no habitual sense of the absolute necessity of his mediation, no habitual trust in his sacrifice, no habitual dependence on his Spirit. Their professed belief of the peculiar principles of the gospel seems to exert no influence over their religious and moral dispositions, and conduct. They think and feel much as if there never had been such a person as Jesus Christ; their life is anything but a life "by the faith of the Son of God."

The religion taught in the New Testament, of which our text is a fair specimen, is Christianity in the most emphatic and peculiar sense of the term: "Christ is all in all." It is HIS religion. It is all *by* him; it is all *about* him; he is its author, he is its substance; he is the sun of this system, the soul of this body. Everything is viewed in its connection with him,—every doctrine and every precept, every privilege and every duty, every promise and every threatening. The ground of acceptance is his sacrifice; the source of light and life, holiness and peace, his Spirit; the rule of duty, his law; the pattern for imitation, his example; the motives to duty, his authority and grace; the great end of all, his glory, God's glory in him. He is considered as the great reservoir of spiritual blessing, filled by the grace of God, ever full, ever flowing to our needy race. "Of God, Christ is made to men, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Every devout feeling, every religious duty, takes a peculiar flavor and color from its reference to his mediation. He, he alone, is the foundation: "other foundation can no man lay."[3] Let us seek that Christ may be in us what he is in our Bibles! Let us see to it that he be not only admitted by us to be *the* foundation, but that he be *our* foundation; and let us every day, every hour be coming, in the faith of the truth, to him as the divinely-appointed foundation. Let us seek to be more and more "grounded on him in love," and let the language of our hearts be that of the dying martyr: "None but Christ, none but Christ."

[1] Eph. i. 20–22; iv. 15, 16. [2] Eph. iii. 10. [3] 1 Cor. i. 30; iii. 11.

The truths now stated cast also a steady and pleasing light on a subject of deep interest at all times, of peculiarly deep interest in the times that are passing over us: the true nature of the union of the Church, and the true means of promoting it. It is the union of "living stones," and that is to be promoted by "coming to *the* living stone." No union of dead stones can ever form a "spiritual house." There is no becoming living stones, but by coming to *the* living stone; no coming closely together among the living stones, but by coming individually closer to the living stone; no coming closer to the living stone, without coming closer to one another. No combination of worldly men can form or promote the union of the Church. That union is union in truth and love; and this can have place only among those who "have received out of his fulness," who, according to the benignant good pleasure of the Father, is "full of truth and grace." And it will take place just in proportion to the degree in which these communications are received. Oh, when the Church, the visible assembly of the professed people of God, becomes, as we trust it one day shall, obviously a well-compacted building of living stones, closely cemented to one another, by all being firmly attached to the great living foundation, what a spectacle will the Zion of the Lord, all radiant with divine light, then exhibit? Then will be accomplished the promise which has cheered the heart of her genuine children in the seasons of her desolation; "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. In righteousness shall thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. The glory of Lebanon shall come to thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." Then shall the palace of the great King, the Lord of Hosts, the temple of the God of heaven and earth, be "established on the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it." And should the kings of the earth, as they have often done, assemble against it, "they shall pass by together; they shall see it, and marvel; they shall be troubled, and pass away." And a great voice shall be heard in heaven: "Behold, the tabernacle of God;" the spiritual house, formed of the living stones on the living foundation; all shining with living light and holy beauty: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Who, that has any part in the faith and feeling of a Christian, can help saying in his heart, "Hasten it, O Lord, in its time. How long, O Lord, how long?" "He that testifieth these things saith, and he is faithful who hath promised, Behold, I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."[1]

I proceed now to call your attention shortly to the subsidiary statements, which all, as it were, cluster around this great central

[1] Isa. liv. 11–14; lx. 13. Micah iv. 1. Rev. xxi. 3; xxii. 20.

one, which is, indeed, the sum and substance of "the gospel of our salvation."

The first of these is, 'Jesus Christ, as the foundation of the spiritual temple, is "laid by God:" ' "Behold," saith Jehovah by the prophet, "I lay in Sion a sure foundation." The phrase, "in Sion," seems intended to mark that the foundation was the foundation of a temple, a palace for himself. "Mount Sion, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole land," was "the mountain of God's holiness," the mountain set apart for himself. "He chose the Mount Zion, which he loved." While "he was known in Judah, and his name was great in Israel, in Salem was his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion."[1] To lay a foundation, then, "in Zion," is to lay the foundation of a temple, and of a temple to Jehovah.

We have already seen what is signified by Jesus Christ being this foundation. Our inquiry now is, what is meant by this foundation being laid by Jehovah? It indicates that the whole arrangement is not the result of human, of created, wisdom or power, but of divine. No man, no angel laid this foundation. "I lay it," says Jehovah. It is equivalent to,—'I appoint him to the character emblematized by the foundation of the spiritual temple. I invest him with it. I qualify him for it. I accredit him in it.' Jesus Christ is the divinely appointed, the divinely qualified, the divinely raised up, the divinely accredited Saviour of men; "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world;" at the appointed period "sent forth;" possessed of every necessary qualification, and bringing along with him every necessary credential; and "all" these "things are of God." His destination, his constitution, his qualifications, his attestation, are all divine. There seems to be a peculiar reference to the manifestation of this glorious truth, when "God raised Jesus from the dead, and set him at his own right hand." Then was "the stone set at naught of the builders" made to appear to be indeed "the head stone," the principal stone "of the corner." Then was it proclaimed as from heaven, "Let all the house of Israel," let all the family of man, "know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom men crucified, both Lord and Christ."[2]

The second subsidiary statement is, 'this foundation is a "chief," or the chief "corner-stone." ' The stone on which the angle of a building rests, gives not only support, but connection, to the different parts of the building. It joins the different walls and stones into one building. The idea intended to be conveyed seems to be this, that the union of Christians as a body fitted for enjoying the divine presence and promoting the divine honor, depends on their individually being connected with Jesus Christ, as the divinely appointed, qualified, constituted, accredited Saviour. It is this common connection with him which is the basis of their connection with each other. "In him," united to him, "they are builded together, a habitation of God through the Spirit," a spiritual habitation of God. It is thus that they are "knit together," thus that they are "fitly joined and compacted."

[1] Psal. xlviii. 1, 2; lxxviii. 68; lxxvi. 1, 2.
[2] 1 Pet. i. 20. Gal. iv. 4. Psal. cxviii. 22. Acts iv. 10–12; ii. 36.

The third subsidiary statement is, that this foundation is "chosen or elect." These words seem intended as a translation of the Hebrew phrase rendered in our version of the Old Testament, a "tried stone," proved and approved, and therefore chosen, selected, appointed, and employed to serve an important purpose. When God from eternity appointed his Son to be the Saviour of men, the foundation of the spiritual temple, the Father knew the Son; he knew his capacities, he knew he could bear all that was to be laid on him, both the weight of suffering, and "the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory;" and previously to his actually constituting him "Lord and Christ," and holding him forth to men in these characters, he had been exposed to every species of trial competent to him, and had stood the trial. Every test applied, but brought out more fully his complete fitness for the mighty work to which he was appointed.

The fourth subsidiary statement is, that this foundation is "precious," that is, highly valuable, as possessed of every quality necessary in a foundation, and as alone being possessed of the qualities necessary in the foundation of such a building; for "other foundation can no man lay save that which is laid, Christ Jesus." The idea is, Jesus Christ is a "precious," an all-accomplished Saviour, a perfect Redeemer, having all the knowledge, all the wisdom, all the power, all the merit, all the compassion arising from himself having "suffered, being tried," which are necessary to fit him for accomplishing the work of salvation in the best possible way. And he is "precious," too, as the only Saviour. He is not one among many saviours; not the best among them; he is the only Saviour. He can, and he only can, save from evils; he can, and he only can, raise to blessings; deliverance from the first, and possession of the second of which, are absolutely necessary and completely sufficient to secure us from being miserable, and for making us happy, without measure and without end, up to the largest capacity of our nature for suffering or enjoyment, and during the whole eternity of our being. "The Deity, filling his human nature with all manner of grace in its highest perfection, made him infinitely precious and excellent; and not only was he thus excellent in himself, but he is of precious virtue, which he lets forth and imparts to others, of such a virtue that a touch of him is the only cure of spiritual diseases. Men tell of strange virtues of some stones; but it is certain that this precious stone hath not only virtue to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead. Dead bodies he raised in the days of his abode on earth, and dead souls he doth still raise by the power of his word."[1]

The fifth subsidiary statement is, 'this foundation-stone was "disallowed and rejected of men:" but, notwithstanding, made by God to answer all the purposes for which it was intended.' The direct reference is to the rejection, by the Jewish nation, of Jesus Christ as the Saviour promised to the Fathers. When the word, made flesh of the seed of David according to the promise, "came to his own, his own received him not."[2] Instead of honoring him as the sent of God, the divinely destined, qualified, accredited Saviour, they regarded

[1] Leighton. [2] John i. 11.

him with contempt and abhorrence as a low-born impostor, and put him to the death of a blasphemer and a traitor. But while this is the direct reference, the statement is meant to embrace a wider range of facts. The Jews were just a specimen of our race, and acted as the race would have done in similar circumstances; and men generally, universally till they are taught of God, disallow and reject Jesus Christ as the foundation; and though they do not do this exactly in the same way as the Jews did, for this is impossible, they manifest the same spirit, they do substantially the same thing. Jesus Christ, made known in the word of the truth of the gospel as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, is by the great body of mankind not acknowledged. They do not own his authority, trust in his atonement, imbibe his Spirit, obey his laws. But though men reject him, God owns him: he shows that in his estimation he is proved, approved, excellent, invaluable. The stone which the "Jewish builders rejected," he made "the chief stone of the corner." He raised him to his own right hand, and gave him all the authority and power, as Mediator, which were necessary to carry forward to accomplishment the benignant purposes of those severe trials by which his excellence had been so fully proved. And still, though mankind very generally reject the Saviour, and so, refusing to build on him the only foundation, perish, yet this foundation of God standeth sure. "Jesus Christ" remains "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" and while he is to multitudes, to all who reject him, "a stumbling-block and foolishness," by divine power and grace he is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation, to all who believe;" "made of God to them wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."[1] Men may stumble at the foundation so as to fall, but they cannot move it, or render it, in any degree, unfit for the great purpose for which it is laid,—to be the sure support of that edifice of mercy and holiness, of which Jehovah has said, "It shall be built forever."

The last subsidiary statement is, that this foundation is a "living stone." The general meaning of this, at first sight paradoxical, declaration, is abundantly obvious. He is a suitable foundation for a spiritual temple, formed not of dead matter, but of intelligent beings. But while this is its meaning, this does not exhaust its meaning. The epithet "living" is, I apprehend, intended to express those qualities in Christ Jesus which make him a fit foundation for a spiritual temple. He is so a "living stone," as that dead stones, when laid on him, become living stones. He has in himself, and has the capacity of communicating to others, all that is necessary to make them fit recipients of the divine presence, fit instruments for promoting the divine glory. He is the living and life-giving foundation. He is full of spiritual life, grace, and truth; and so full, that no man can be brought near him, but straightway he fills him with grace and truth too. It is well said by an old interpreter, "He is called the living stone, as he is called the living bread and the living water, not only because he has life in himself, but also because he gives life to the dead. He lives, and because he lives, they who eat him as the living bread, they who drink him as the living water, they who come to him and build on him

[1] Heb. xiii. 8. 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, 30.

as the living stone, live also." In the words of the good archbishop, "He is here called a living stone, not only because of his immortality and glorious resurrection, being a lamb that was slain, and is alive forever and ever, but because he is the principle of spiritual and eternal life to us," a living foundation that transfuses its life into the whole building, and every stone of it, "in whom," united to whom, "all the building is fitly framed." It is the spirit that flows from him which enlivens it, and knits it together, not as a dead mass, but as a "living body." This foundation, from the peculiarity of the case, does for its living superstructure what the root does in the vegetable world to the trunk, the branches, and the leaves, and what the head or the heart in the animal body does to all the members.

Such, then, is the truth about Christ, which the converted strangers scattered abroad believed, that Jesus Christ, though rejected by the great body of mankind, is the divinely chosen, the divinely qualified, the divinely proved, the divinely approved, the divinely constituted, the divinely accredited, Saviour of man,—possessed of every necessary excellence for making man truly and eternally happy, by making him the fit recipient of the divine presence and benefits, and the fit instrument for declaring the divine excellence,—showing forth the divine praise. This they believed, for they had heard it "in the word of the truth of the gospel"—a word to which "God bore witness by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost," and which was confirmed by the testimony of the law and the prophets. And believing this, they had come to him as the sure foundation laid by God, and had built themselves on him. Believing the truth about him, they had acted towards him according to their faith, implicitly submitting to his teaching as their great prophet, relying on his atonement as their only priest, obeying his commandments as their Sovereign Lord and King. This is the way in which they ceased to be dead stones and became living stones; came out of darkness into light; and from not being a people became God's people; and from not having found mercy became the happy possessors of the peculiar favor of Jehovah, and of all its glorious results.

There is a peculiarity in the phraseology which deserves attention before we close our remarks on this part of the subject. The word is in the present, not in the past tense. It is not "having come," but "coming;" not "he who has believed," but "he that believeth." This intimates, that to the continued enjoyment of the peculiar privileges of Christians, there must be continued faith in him, continued coming to him. In order to a life of christian enjoyment, there must be "a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us." [1]

III.—THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGES OF CHRISTIANS.

§ 1.—*General Statement.*

It is now time that we proceed to consider the view which the text gives us of the dignified and happy state into which Christians are

[1] Gal. ii. 20.

brought by their believing on, and coming to, Christ. That state is a state of nearness to God, of reconciliation to him, of resemblance to him, of fellowship with him,—a state of dignity and happiness, just because it is a state of nearness to the infinitely great and glorious and ever-blessed God,—a state which strongly contrasts with their previous condition, which was one of distance from God, a state of enmity and alienation; and which, just because it was a state of distance from the source and sum of true glory and happiness, was a state of degradation and misery.

Their happy state, as well as the means by which they reach it, is stated generally in the words, "To you then who believe there is honor;" [1] for this is the literal and natural rendering of the words in the beginning of the seventh verse, which in our version runs thus: "Unto you who believe he is precious." He that believeth on the foundation laid in Zion by Jehovah, that is, as we have shown, he who believes the truth respecting Jesus Christ as the divinely laid foundation, shall not be ashamed or confounded. The faith of the truth naturally, necessarily, gives origin to hope or expectation of certain blessings; and this hope, founded on this faith, "maketh not ashamed," does not disappoint. He who cherishes it shall certainly obtain the blessings he expects; and he shall as certainly find in these blessings that satisfying portion of the heart which he had anticipated. Not shame, but honor, shall be to him. The privileges which, as a believer in Christ, a comer to Christ, a builder on Christ, he enjoys, are of the most dignifying nature. He is brought into a near and most honorable relation to the greatest and best being in the universe. Coming to Christ, he comes to God through him. He becomes "an heir of God," by becoming "a joint heir with Christ Jesus." The general statement is expanded in a great variety of expressions, some of them highly figurative, but all of them full of meaning, rich in instruction and consolation. Christians become living stones; they are built up a spiritual house; they are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; they are a chosen generation; a royal priesthood; a holy nation; a peculiar people, that they might show forth the praises of him who called them from darkness to light; the people of God, objects of his peculiar complacency, the subjects of his saving blessings. Let us very shortly inquire into the import of these descriptions of the Christians' peculiar privileges.

§ 2.—*Particular Statement.*

(1.) *Christians are "living stones," built up into a temple.*

First of all, they are described as becoming "living stones," by coming to Christ as the living stone. We have already seen they were "dead stones," entirely unfit for forming a part of a spiritual temple. But having believed in, and come to "the living stone,"

[1] Ὑμῖν οὖν ἡ τιμὴ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, "Cedit honori et commodo vestro, quod in Christo creditis."—GERHARD. "Vobis, igitur honos, credentibus, ille nimirum honos ut non confundamini ab eo in adventu ejus, sed sicut ipse ait, siquis mihi ministraverit, honorificabit eum pater meus." John xii. 26.—BEDA.

they become "living stones."[1] From that connection with Christ, which is necessarily implied in believing the truth respecting him, a change, both of state and character, takes place, which makes it becoming in Jehovah to employ them as materials in the erection of his spiritual temple, and which fits them for answering the great end of a temple, in doing honor to the Divinity who dwells in it. Naturally "far off," they are "brought nigh by the blood of Christ," which is sprinkled on them in the faith of the truth. Alienated from God, they are "reconciled in Christ." Clothed with his righteousness, they are objects of complacent regard to the Holy and Just One; and animated by his Spirit, they are "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which he has made them accepted in the beloved." Quickened by their connection with him who, "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is a quickening Spirit," they are made fit for serving the living God; fit for yielding spiritual, true worship to Him who is a Spirit, and who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

But they not only become living stones, but as living stones they are "built up a spiritual house."[2] They are not only honored and happy as individuals, but they are formed into a holy, honorable, blessed fellowship. In consequence of their common connection with Christ, they have a mutual connection with each other, and form a living spiritual temple, blessed with the presence, devoted to the worship and honor of Jehovah, the fountain of life, the Father of spirits. They become members of the most honorable of all societies; the "family in heaven, and on earth called by the one name;" "the name above every name." They are enrolled among the brethren, "to whom the perfected Redeemer declares his Father's name." They are members of the Church, "in the midst of which he celebrates his praise." It is the same idea, though under a different image, which the apostle so beautifully expresses in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Ye are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel."[3]

(2.) *Christians are "a holy priesthood."*

In the next branch of the inspired account of the Christians, privileges, the figure varies; and they who were represented under the figure of a spiritual temple, are represented under the figure of "a

[1] Multa nomina, quæ Christo competunt in singulari, christianis tribuuntur in plurali. Christus lapis, christiani lapides; lapis vivus, lapides vivi. Ex illo, hi quoque sunt filii, sacerdotes, reges, agni.—BENGEL.

[2] Secundum sapientiores Judæos Messias non debet templum tertium materiale ædificare sed בית רוחנית domum spiritualem, cum secundum illos sub Messia omnia debeant esse spiritualia. Ad istam sententiam videtur alludere Petrus Apostolus, qui epistola sua, Cap. ii. 5, dicit nos esse lapides ἐμψύχους et ζῶντας et πνευματικὸν οἶκον.—LE MOYNE, Not. et Obs. ad Barnab. Epist. Varia Sacra, vol. ii. p. 914.

[3] Heb. xii. 22–24.

holy priesthood," set apart "to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Under the New Testament economy, there is but one priest, in the strict meaning of that word as defined by the Apostle Paul: "One taken from among men, ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." [1] Our great High Priest, of whom all the priests under the Mosaic dispensation were but figures, is "the one Mediator between God and man." [2] He presents the only effectual atoning sacrifice. He, on the ground of that sacrifices, makes intercession for those who come to God through him, and obtains acceptance both for them and their services, and authoritatively blesses his people. Whoever professes to be a priest under the new economy, invades the prerogative of Him, who is "a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec," and is guilty of presumption, as far exceeding that of Korah and his company, as the ministry which Jesus hath received is "a more excellent ministry" than that of Aaron or any of his sons.[3]

It is common, however, in the New Testament, to represent all Christians as figurative priests, in the sense of persons solemnly consecrated to, and habitually engaged in, the divine service.[4] These two views are given us in the passage before us. You are "a holy priesthood," and you are a priesthood engaged in presenting to God "spiritual sacrifices, which are acceptable to God by Christ Jesus." You belong to a higher and holier fellowship than that of the Aaronical priesthood.[5]

Christians are a "holy," a consecrated priesthood. You are aware that the priests, under the Old Testament, were separated from among their brethren. They were so by their birth, and by their consecration. As sons of Aaron, they belonged to the priestly order. In like manner, all Christians, by their being born again, are set apart to the service of God. And as Aaron's sons were consecrated by the sprinkling of blood and the washing of water; so Christians have their conscience sprinkled by the blood of Him, "who by the eternal Spirit, offered himself a sacrifice to God without spot," and are purified "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." [6]

[1] Heb. v. 1. [2] 1 Tim. ii. 5.

[3] "The name Priest is nowhere in Scripture attributed peculiarly and distinctly to the ministers of the Gospel, as such: that which puts a difference between them and the rest of the people of God's holiness seems to be a more direct participation of Christ's prophetical, not sacerdotal, office. When Christ ascended up on high, he gave some to be *prophets*, Eph. iv. 11; none as we find to be *priests*. Priests are a sort of church officers whom Christ never appointed."—OWEN.

[4] Est autem illud non temere factum, ut Spiritus Sanctus nunquam in N. Testamento sacerdotis vel sacerdotii nomen ad evangelii ministros accommodârit.—BEZA.

[5] "When the apostles applied the Old Testament idea of priesthood to Christianity, this was done invariably for the simple purpose of showing that no such visible particular priesthood could find place in the new community; that, since free access to God and to heaven had been once for all opened to believers by one High Priest, even Christ, they had, by virtue of their union to him, become themselves a spiritual priesthood consecrated to God; their calling being none other than to dedicate their entire life to God as a thank-offering for the grace of redemption, to publish abroad the power and grace of him who had called them out of the kingdom of darkness into his marvellous light, to make their life one continual priesthood, one spiritual worship, springing from faith, working by love, one continuous testimony for their Saviour."—NEANDER.

[6] Heb. ix. 14. Tit. iii. 5.

As they resemble the priests in their consecration, so they resemble them also in their work. They "offer up spiritual sacrifices." The sacrifices they present are not expiatory, but eucharistic sacrifices.[1] The only effectual expiatory sacrifice ever offered was that offered on Calvary, and that so completely answered its purpose, that it put an end to all such oblations. It "perfected forever all those who were sanctified;" secured complete reconciliation; full, free, everlasting pardon; eternal redemption; salvation with eternal glory; so that there was no more room for sacrifices for sin. No; it is an undoubted truth, one equally delightful to those who trust in, and dreadful to those who reject, this atoning oblation: "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."[2] The eucharistic sacrifices presented by "the spiritual priesthood" are not material, but spiritual; not literal, but figurative sacrifices. The leading idea is, that Christians are brought into a very near relation to God; and that the whole of their lives should be devoted to his spiritual service.[3] They are to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of the lips," "the calves of the lips," as Hosea has it—not literal calves—"giving thanks to his name." "To do good and communicate they are not to forget, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." They are to "present their bodies"—themselves, embodied living beings, not the dead bodies of slain beasts—"a living sacrifice." "Whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, they are to do all to the glory of God;" and "whatsoever they do in word or in deed, they are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him."[4]

External services are spiritual sacrifices only when they embody a right state of mind and heart,—an enlightened mind, a pure devout heart. It is the gift of the heart which makes all other gifts easy to ourselves, acceptable to our God. "My son," says God, "give me thine heart;" and what follows? "let thine eyes observe my ways."[5] "This makes the eyes and ears, and tongue and hands, to be holy as God's peculiar property; and being once given and consecrated to Him, it is sacrilege to turn them to any unholy use."[6]

Such services of the spiritual priesthood, so reasonable, so dignifying, are said to be "acceptable to God by Christ Jesus."[7] These services are in themselves very undeserving of acceptance; for in the best of them, while we are here below, there is much wanting, and something wrong. But if they are the sincere expression of trust in God's mercy, love to his law, zeal for his glory, with all their

[1] "The sacrifices we are enjoined to offer give ground to the appellation Priests. Now they are of divers sorts, though all in general eucharistical, as—First, of prayers and thanksgivings, Psal. cxvi. 17, cxli. 2; Heb. xiii. 14: Secondly, of good works, Heb. xiii. 14: Thirdly, *ἀνταθυσία*, crucifying the old man, killing sin, and offering up ourselves, souls and bodies, an acceptable sacrifice to God, Rom. xii. 1: Fourthly, the sweet incense of martyrdom, Phil. ii. 17."—OWEN.

[2] Heb. x. 26.

[3] Inter hostias spirituales primum locum obtinet generalis NOSTRI oblatio de qua Paulus. —Rom. xii. 1. Neque enim offerre quicquam possumus Deo, donec illi nos ipsos in sacrificium obtulerimus: quod fit nostri abnegatione. Sequuntur postea preces et gratiarum actiones, eleemosynæ et omnia pietatis exercitia.—CALVIN.

[4] Heb. xiii. 15, 16. Hos. xiv. 2. Rom. xii. 1. 1 Cor. x. 31. Col. iii. 17.

[5] Prov. xxiii. 26. תִּרְצֶינָה rendered by Symmachus *θελησάτωσαν*.

[6] Leighton. [7] Isa. lvi. 7. Αἱ *θυσίαι αὐτῶν ἔσονται δεκταὶ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριόν μου*, LXX.

imperfections, they are acceptable. Like a kind father, he loves to hear even the lisping accents of affectionate confidence from his child; and a very trifle, presented as a token of loyal submission, is in his eyes of great value. Even under the law, he who had not a lamb was welcome with his pigeon; and under the better economy, none need forbear sacrifices for poverty. What God desires is the heart, and there is none so poor but he has a heart to give him. Alas! that so many should want the heart to give the heart they have to give. It is not, however, so much the meanness of the gift offered, as the guiltiness of the offerer, that fills us with anxiety as to the acceptance of our services. Our foul hands pollute the best sacrifices; but where the sacrifice has not the character of insincerity —a character which will certainly secure rejection, for "if we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us,"—notwithstanding all their faults, the services of the Christian are acceptable, "acceptable by or through Jesus Christ." The spiritual priest is clothed with the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and in his clothing we are like Jacob in his brother's garments. There is "the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed." If we offer our sacrifices by him, if we put them into his hands to offer to the Father, we need not doubt that they will be accepted for his sake.

The phrase, "by Christ Jesus," may be considered as qualifying both the phrase "to offer," and the expression "acceptable." We ought not to offer anything but by him, trusting in his mediation, depending on his Spirit; and in doing so we are sure to be accepted, for he is God's beloved Son, in whom his soul is delighted; not only delighted and pleased with himself, but in him, with all things and persons that appear in him, and are presented by him. "This alone answers all our doubts; for we ourselves, for as little as we see in that way, may yet see so much in our best services, so many wanderings, so much deadness to prayer, as would make us still doubtful of acceptance, and might say with Job, 'Although he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to me,' were it not this, that our prayers and our sacrifices pass through Christ's hands. He is that angel that hath much sweet odor to mingle with the prayers of the saints. He purifies them with his own merits and intercessions, and so makes them pleasing unto the Father. Oh, how ought our hearts to be knit to him, by whom we are brought into favor with God, and kept in favor with him, in whom we obtain all the good we receive, and in whom all we offer is accepted! In him are all our supplies of grace, and our hopes of glory."[1]

(3.) *Christians are a "chosen generation."*

Let us now look at the next representation of the Christians' privileges. They are "a chosen generation." This, like the other appellations here given to Christians, is borrowed from the descriptive names given to the Israelitish people under a former dispensation. They are spoken of as "a generation," a race or family, the descendants of one father, standing to each other in the relation of brethren.

[1] Leighton.

Sometimes they are represented as the race or family of Abraham and of Israel. "Seek the Lord, and his strength," says the Psalmist; "seek him for evermore. Remember his marvellous works which he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; O ye, the seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Israel his chosen." And they are very frequently termed the house or family of Israel.

At other times they are represented as the family or children of God. "Ye are the children of the Lord your God," says Moses; "Israel," says Jehovah, by Moses, to Pharaoh, "is my son, my first-born; let my son go, that he may serve me;" "Out of Egypt," says he by the prophet Hosea, "out of Egypt have I called my son."[1]

And as the Israelites are often spoken of as a race or generation, the family of Abraham, the family of God, so they are spoken of as "a chosen generation," a selected family: "The Lord," says Moses, "loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them. The heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord thy God's, the earth also, and all that is therein; only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is at this day."[2] "I give water in the wilderness," says Jehovah, "and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen."

Now this descriptive appellation, a chosen generation, originally given to the people of Israel, belongs to the people of God, under the new economy, in a far higher sense, with a much greater depth of meaning: "They that are Christ's are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Though originally aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, they have been brought near, and, having believed, "they are blessed with believing Abraham." They all are, like him, justified freely by God's grace. They all, like him, have Jehovah for their God, according to the promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." They all, like him, have "the inheritance of the world" secured to them; a holier, happier, securer possession than Canaan, is their common property; "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, laid up in heaven for them, and to which they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."[3]

But the appellation "generation," or race, leads us to think of them, not only as the spiritual family of Abraham, but as the spiritual family of God. They are "all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus." They are the family of God in a far higher sense than ancient Israel; "For to as many as receive Christ, to them gives he the privilege[4] of being the sons of God; and they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "They are born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even of the word of the Lord, which liveth and abideth forever." "Of his own will begat he them by the word of truth, that they might be a kind of first-fruits among his creatures." They are

[1] Psal. cv. 4, 5, 6. Deut. xiv. 1. Exod. iv. 22. Hos. xi. 1.
[2] Deut. iv. 37; vii. 6; x. 15. Isa. xliii. 20.
[3] Gal. iii. 29, 9. Eph. ii. 12, 13. 1 Cor. iii. 23. Rom. iv. 13. 1 Pet. i. 4, 6.
[4] Ἐξουσία.

brought into the relation, formed to the character, of "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." "To them pertains the adoption," in a far more exalted sense than it ever belonged to Israel after the flesh: "God hath sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them who were under the law, that we," all believers, "might receive the adoption of sons;" and, because they are sons, he sends the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, the spirit, not of bondage, but of adoption, teaching them to cry Abba, Father. And "since they are now sons, they are heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." What the crowning dignity and happiness included in this sonship is, we cannot tell, we cannot adequately conceive. Well might the apostle say of this race, this generation, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." [1]

This view of the state of Christians as a race, brings before our minds two ideas,—disconnection from the rest of mankind, and intimate union among themselves. "Israel, as a people, dwelt alone, and was not numbered with the nations." [2] Christians "come out from the world, and are separate." They are in the world, not of it. They have "saved themselves from the untoward generation," who are of their father, the devil, and do his works.

Israel was not only a separate body from the rest of mankind, but a brotherhood. "Moses, when he would have set at one two Israelites who strove, said, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?" Christians have one Father, one Elder Brother; they have a common faith and hope, common interests and enemies, common duties and dangers, common joys and sorrows, one mind, one heart, one inheritance. These are the leading ideas suggested by Christians being called a race, a generation, or family. [3]

But they are not only addressed as a generation, but as "a chosen generation." The choice here referred to may either be their eternal sovereign election of God, to the enjoyment of eternal life through the mediation of Jesus Christ, or, what is the result and manifestation of this, their actual selection from the body of mankind, in what we are accustomed to denominate effectual calling. In both repects they are a chosen generation. There is an important difference between the sense in which Israel after the flesh, and the spiritual Israel, have the appellation "chosen generation" given to them, which deserves to be noticed. Israel, as a race or family, was selected from other races and families. It was the race, not the individuals, that was the direct object of choice. In the case of the spiritual Israel, the individuals are elected; and it is the aggregate of the elected individuals that forms "the chosen generation."

With regard to the former kind of election, the Apostle Paul tells

[1] Gal. iii. 26. John i. 12, 13. 1 Pet. i. 23. James i. 18. 2 Cor. vi. 18. Gal. iv. 4–7. Rom. viii. 17. 1 John iii. 1, 2.

[2] Numb. xxiii. 9. 1 Cor. vi. 16. Acts ii. 40.

[3] Acts vii. 26. John xx. 17. Heb. ii. 11.

us that "God hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world," that he "predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."[1] With regard to the latter kind of election, David speaks of them as "set apart by God for himself;" our Saviour says, "I have chosen you out of the world;" James represents Christians as "a people for his name taken out by God from among the Gentiles;" and our apostle describes them as "elected, or rather selected, according to the fore-knowledge, the pre-ordination of God, by a spiritual consecration, to obedience, the obedience of the truth, the faith of the gospel, and to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus," the enjoyment of the saving effects of the shedding of his blood in expiating sin, opening up a channel for the Spirit, and securing all the blessings of eternal life, "the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory."[2]

It seems to be the latter of these elections which is the fruit of the former, to which here, as well as in the passage just quoted, the apostle refers; for as Leighton justly remarks, "this descriptive appellation, like the others along with which it stands, is plainly designed to describe their present state as different from what it had been," whereas their personal election was, like him who made it, strictly eternal and unchangeable. No change had taken place, could take place, with regard to it.

The privilege involved in being thus a chosen generation is one of inestimable value; and being enjoyed by Christians entirely in consequence of their connection with Christ Jesus, the possession of it is a striking personal demonstration to every one of them of the grace of the Lord. In the enjoyment of this privilege they "have tasted that the Lord is gracious." This will appear, if we attend for a moment to the state of those from among whom they were selected, to the purposes for which they were selected, to him who has selected them, and to the cause in which the selection of them originated.

The original state of this chosen generation was not better than that of other men. It was a state of ignorance and error, and guilt and depravity, of degradation and wretchedness, of condemnation and death. To use the expressive language of the apostle: They were "dead in trespasses and in sins; wherein in time past they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom they had their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others: without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, without God and without hope in the world."[3] What a blessing to be selected from among these victims of error, these slaves of corruption, these heirs of destruction!

And then how does our sense of the value of the blessing rise, when we think of the purpose for which they have been selected, selected to be "heirs of God, and joint-heirs" with his only-begotten Son; to be justified, sanctified, glorified, conformed both in holiness

[1] Eph. i. 4–6. [2] Psal. iv. 3. John xv. 19. Acts xv. 14. 1 Pet. i. 2.
[3] Eph. ii. 1–3, 11, 12.

and happiness to the image of God's own Son; to be blessed with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; to possess an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven, while they are kept for it by the power of God through faith unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time; to be the means of manifesting to the whole intelligent universe of God, how holy, how happy the omnipotent, all-wise, infinitely holy, infinitely benignant Jehovah can make those who are the objects of his peculiar love!

For, to judge aright of the value of this privilege we must never forget that it is GOD who makes both the election and the selection. The value of choice depends on the qualities of the chooser. It is a disgrace not an honor, an evil not a benefit, to be the object of the choice of the unprincipled and foolish. The value of being the object of the choice of an individual is in proportion to his intellect and moral worth, his wise benignity, and his power to gratify it. What is the value, then, of election by the all-perfect One? There is prodigious emphasis on the word God, in these two sayings of the Apostle: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God;" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" [1] Whom he chooses he chooses forever. "He rests in his love." His "purpose, according to election, must stand; and the gifts and the callings which originate in it, are without repentance." [2]

But to raise still higher, if possible, our ideas of the value of this choice or selection, as a proof of the grace of the Lord, let us think once more on the cause in which it originates. It has no cause in the selected ones; the cause is in the selector himself, and that cause is, can be, nothing but grace, sovereign kindness.

The cause of God's selection of ancient Israel was not in them but in him: "The Lord did not set his love on you," says Moses, "nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people); but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." What is said of their entrance into Canaan, is equally true of their election: "Speak not in thy heart, For my righteousness the Lord hath chosen me; for the wickedness of these nations the Lord hath rejected them, and driven them out. But not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart, art thou chosen, and brought in, but that the Lord may perform the word which he spake unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people." [3]

In like manner, the election of those who form the chosen generation under the new economy, is not owing to any previous good quality in them. They are not selected for their worldly wisdom, power, or dignity; "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but

[1] Rom. viii. 17, 29, 30. 1 Thess. i. 4. Rom. viii. 33.
[2] Zeph. iii. 17. Rom. ix. 11; xi. 29.
[3] Deut. vii. 7; ix. 4–6.

God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are! that no flesh should glory in his presence. But that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" [1]

They are not selected for their previous moral worth: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God; yet such were some of you,"—now the "sanctified of Christ Jesus, called to be saints." And even in the case of those who were not remarkable for depravity and guilt, the cause of their being selected cannot be found in their moral worth. In man, in every man born merely of the flesh, "dwelleth no good thing." The only account that can be given, why any of the human family are selected, and why one rather than another is selected, is, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." "He has mercy, because he wills to have mercy, he has compassion because he wills to have compassion." [2] The cause of his own selection appears to every one of the chosen generation "a mystery hid in God;" and, when he thinks of it, his heart overflows equally with gratitude and amazement, "What am I, and what is the house of my father, that I should be brought hitherto? Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
The sovereign grace that spread the feast,
Compell'd me to come in;
Else I had still refus'd to taste,
And perish'd in my sin." [3]

So rich is the display of the grace of the Lord to those who, out of many a kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation, have been selected to form the chosen generation, of which Israel's race was the type and emblem.

(4.) *Christians are a "royal priesthood."*

Let us now turn our attention to the next descriptive appellation given to Christians: "Ye are a royal priesthood." In the preceding part of this paragraph, Christians are represented as "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;" that is, in other words, consecrated to, qualified for, engaged in, the spiritual and acceptable service of God, as God in Christ recon-

[1] 1 Cor. i. 26–31, 19. [2] 1 Cor. vi. 9–11. Matt. xi. 26. Rom. ix. 15. [3] Watts.

ciling the world to himself, in the discharge of all religious and moral duties. Here they are represented as "a royal priesthood."

These words admit of, and have received, various interpretations. By many they have been considered as equivalent to the declarations in the Apocalypse, that Jesus Christ makes his people "kings and priests unto God, even his Father." "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them whom thou hast given me," says our Lord, in that wonderful prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel by John. The glory the Father gave him was, that he should be the great Priest and King of his ransomed people; "a priest upon his throne," according to the ancient oracles: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedec."[1] Of these glories, strictly speaking, no created being can share. But so far as the thing is possible, he makes his people possessors of priestly and regal honors. We have already seen how he makes them Priests; and he makes them kings in giving them even now a noble superiority to things seen and temporal, in enabling them to trample under foot those spiritual enemies, the powers of darkness, and the lusts of their own hearts, which once reigned over them. He will at a future period, in a manner of which we can form only an indistinct conception, the obscurity of unfulfilled prediction resting on it, enable his saints to "take the kingdom," and "reign on the earth."[2] In the great day of final retribution, they, along with him, shall "judge angels;" and to them all, as overcomers, made more than conquerors through him that loved them, will it be given in that day to "sit with him on his throne, even as he also having overcome, sat down with his Father on his throne."[3]

By others the expression has been considered as indicating the exalted nature of the priesthood to which they are raised, or the noble and dignified temper in which they discharge its functions. Their priesthood is not a *plebeian*, but a *royal* priesthood, as far exalted in dignity above the Levitical priesthood, as royalty is above the level of ordinary life; and they perform their priestly functions not in the servile spirit of bondage, but in the noble kingly spirit of the adopted sons of the great King, to whom they minister, "the spirit of glory," as the apostle calls it. Their mien and deportment are "like the children of a king," doing the will of their royal father. Freed from all degrading submission to human authority, they are sovereigns in spiritual things; because, as kings, they own in them no authority but that to which kings are subject, the authority of "the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Viewed in these lights, the expression suggests true and important thoughts, thoughts well fitted to elevate and stimulate the christian mind.

But I cannot help thinking, that as the phrase is certainly borrowed from a passage in the Old Testament Scripture, the first thing to be done to ascertain its meaning, is to refer to that passage. It is to be found in the book of Exodus, "And ye shall be to me a kingdom

[1] Rev. i. 6; v. 10. John xvii. 22. Zech. vi. 13. Psal. ii. 6; cx. 4.
[2] Dan. vii. 18. Rev. v. 10. [3] 1 Cor. vi. 3. Rom. viii. 37. Rev. iii. 21.

of priests, and a holy nation."[1] The words are quoted from the translation in common use when the apostle wrote, of which our version is a literal rendering, but we cannot doubt he means to express the meaning of the inspired text.

The meaning of the words, "ye are a kingdom," as addressed to the Israelites, is by no means obscure. The word "kingdom" plainly signifies, not the territory, but the subjects. You are not a confused mass, a fortuitous assemblage—you are an organized political body; and you are not a republic, a self-governing body—you are a kingdom, the subjects of a sovereign; and you are a kingdom of priests—you have no human supreme magistrate; Jehovah, the object of your worship, is your King, so that the discharge of all your civil duties has a religious character, all being done to God.

Such is plainly the meaning of the language in its original application. Now what is its meaning, as applied by the apostle to Christians as a body? "To you who believe there is honor." All the honors of the ancient people of God are yours, and yours in a far higher sense than ever they were theirs. They were a chosen generation, so are you. They were a kingdom of priests, and so are you. You are "a kingdom;" you form a regular social body. Christians are not a collection of isolated individuals; they are the "body of Christ, and members in particular." They are "one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."[2] And they are not a republic, they are not a self-governing body; they are "a kingdom," they are the subjects of a sovereign. They have *one* King, Jesus. They should "call no man master on earth," for they have no master on earth; "their Master is in heaven."[3] In everything connected with religion, they must be regulated by his will; they must believe no doctrine but what he has revealed; observe no ordinances but what he has appointed; and they must believe every doctrine he has revealed, and observe every ordinance he has appointed, and believe the doctrine because he has revealed it, and observe the ordinance because he has appointed it. For them to follow on these points the guidance of their own reason or caprice, is to usurp their Sovereign's place. For them to follow on these points the guidance of other men, is to exalt them into his throne. So far as men are concerned, they have a right to think and act for themselves in religion, but, so far as their rightful Sovereign is concerned, they have no such right. They are to think as he directs them, they are to do as he bids them. This would be a hard arrangement if their King were a fallible creature, though the best of men, the wisest of angels; but instead of there being hardship or degradation in the case, this arrangement is full of honor and blessedness. Their Sovereign is the infinitely wise, righteous, holy Jehovah.

They are a kingdom, but they are "a kingdom of priests." They belong to, complexly taken they form, the kingdom that is not of this world. They belong to a spiritual monarchy, at the head of which is Jehovah, in the person of the only-begotten Son. They are his subjects; and, being his subjects, all their duties are religious duties,

[1] Exod. xix. 6. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 27. Eph. iv. 12. [3] Matt. xxiii. 8.

all exercises of the priestly function. "Whatsoever they do," in the way of duty, they are required to "do it as to the Lord." "They serve the Lord Christ." "Whatsoever they do, whether in word or deed, they do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him." And "whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, they do all to his glory." [1]

Who can contemplate such holy dignities without a disposition to felicitate their possessors? "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," allow me to congratulate you on the dignity and blessedness of belonging to a society so illustrious as this chosen family, this priestly kingdom; for if you really are what your profession declares you to be, you do belong to it. "Happy are ye, O people saved by the Lord! who is like unto you?" "The lines have fallen to you in pleasant places, and ye have a goodly heritage." "Children of Abraham." "Children of God." Brethren of him who is "the first-born among many brethren." "Sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." "Heirs of God." "Joint-heirs with Christ." "Priests of the Lord." "Ministers of your God." Ever dwelling in his sanctuary, ever engaged in his service, gratefully acknowledge that grace of the Lord to which you are indebted for all this honor, security, and happiness. It is all the gift of rich sovereign mercy. Not to you, not to you, but to him is due all the glory.

I trust you are saying in your hearts, "who is a God like unto our God," "rich in mercy," "mighty to save?" "There is none like the God of Jeshurun." "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?" [2] The best way of showing your gratitude is, by acting in a manner corresponding to the high and holy dignity to which you are raised. Conduct yourselves like members of the chosen family, denizens of the priestly kingdom. Be affectionate children; give your Father the veneration, the esteem, the love, the confidence, he so well deserves. Be obedient children. "Submit to the Father of spirits." Give due honor to Him, your elder brother, who has been appointed "as a son over the whole family;" and remember, that it is the Father's will, "that all should honor the Son as they honor himself." Seek to know and do all his will. "Observe all things whatsoever he has commanded you," and "walk in all his ordinances and commandments blameless." Cherish an enlightened, warm, influential affection for all the members of the chosen generation. "Love as brethren," and "walk in love," even as our Father and elder Brother have loved us. Be jealous of the honor of the family, be active in promoting the interests of the family, seek to be instrumental in increasing the number of the family. Are you a chosen generation, a select race? See that you "make your calling and election sure, by adding to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity." [3] Remember the great object for which you were chosen: both elected and selected, that ye might be conformed to the

[1] Col. iii. 23, 24. 1 Cor. x. 31. Col. iii. 17.
[2] Micah vii. 18. Eph. ii. 4. Isa. lxiii. 1. Deut. xxxiii. 26. Psal. cxvi. 12.
[3] John v. 23. Matt. xxviii. 20. Eph. v. 2. 2 Pet. i. 5–7.

image of God's Son; that ye should be holy, and without blame before God in love; that ye should be zealous of good works; and, in one word, "as he whom we call Father is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; for it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." And remember, that ye are not only children of your Father in heaven, but that ye are subjects of your Sovereign in heaven; and as Israel, "rejoice in him who made you" a kingdom of priests; as "children of Zion, be joyful in your king." "Remember that he is your Lord and worship him." You are not to be regulated, either as to faith or practice, by your own will, or by the reason or will of other men, but by his mind as made known in his word. Seek entire subjugation of mind and will to him. Have no mind but his mind, no will but his will.[1]

And beware of invading his prerogative, in trampling on one another's rights. It is God alone who has a right to dictate to his own subjects. Let us remember, that "for this cause Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he should be the Lord of the dead and of the living," of his own people, in life and in death. Beware of attempting to lord it over one another's conscienes. "Why, then, dost thou judge thy brother, or why dost thou set at naught thy brother; for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God," "the great God our Saviour, Jesus Christ?" "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of *himself*," not of his brother, "to God."

Finally, never forget the sacred character of your relation as subjects, that ye are sacerdotal subjects, ministering to a Divine Sovereign. Always think, and feel, and act, as in the holy place, in the immediate presence of "the Holy, Holy, Holy One;" let your whole lives be an act of worship, as well as an act of allegiance: "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of your lips, giving thanks to his name; and to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."[2]

(5.) *Christians are a "holy nation."*

The next descriptive appellation of Christians, which our text brings before us for consideration is, "A holy nation." This, like those which precede it, is borrowed from the language of the Old Testament in reference to the ancient people of God: "Ye shall be to me a holy nation," said Jehovah to Israel, by Moses, at Sinai, immediately before giving the law. "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God," said Moses to his countrymen, when just about to cross the Jordan. And in the promulgation of the various laws given to them, we often meet with these words: "Ye shall be holy, or be ye holy, for I am holy."[3]

Israel was a "nation," a large body of men, residing in the same neighborhood, subject to the same government, regulated by the same laws; distinguished by the same customs, having common rights,

[1] Psal. cxlix. 2; xlv. 11. [2] Heb. xiii. 15, 16.
[3] Exod. xix. 6. Deut. vii. 6. Lev. xix. 2; xx. 7, &c. &c.

interests, and enemies. Previously to the giving of the law, Israel was "a generation," a race, a family, a chosen generation; but it was at Sinai that they became a "kingdom, a nation; a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." Then began to be fulfilled the promises made to Abraham: "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply: a nation, and a company of nations, shall be of thee."[1]

Israel was "a holy nation." There can be no reasonable doubt, that by far the greater part of those individuals who were really morally holy in the world at that time, belonged to this nation; but when, as a nation, they are called "holy," the meaning obviously is, separated from the nations who were devoted to idolatry, and consecrated to the service of Jehovah, the only living and true God. Such is the import of the expression, "a holy nation," as applied to ancient Israel.

We are now prepared to answer the more important and interesting question, What are the truths respecting the situation and character of Christians, which the appellation, as addressed to them, is intended to suggest? Like the denomination, generation or race, kingdom and people, it indicates that they are, properly speaking, not a number of unconnected individuals, but a society; not disjointed members, but a "body fitly joined and compacted by that which every joint supplieth." They do not indeed reside all in the same geographical district. Even those of them who are more immediately addressed in the text, were "strangers," scattered over a wide region, residing in the midst of various nations. At that time, members of the society, the spiritual nation, were to be found throughout every part of the Roman empire, and even beyond its bounds, "in every nation under heaven;" and since that time, "the holy nation" has still more fully realized the description given of it, as "a people redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."[2]

Yet in a sense suitable to the spiritual nature of the society, they all dwell together: they are all "a people near to Jehovah," and therefore near to one another. They all dwell in the spiritual Canaan; in the "Jerusalem, which is the mother of them all." They all "dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The whole of the tribes of the spiritual Israel encamp around "the ark of testimony," "the true tabernacle, which God pitched, and not man."[3] The ordinary limitations of time and place do not indeed affect this society. This nation is identical with the chosen generation; the family in heaven, and on earth, called by one name. This accounts for their being called a nation, which always suggests the idea of great numbers.

[1] Gen. xii. 2. [2] Rev. v. 9.

[3] "There is now no more any place on earth where the whole church assembles for worship; but they all assemble in the heavenly Jerusalem, where Jesus is, the antitype of that on earth to which the church of Israel assembled, and towards which they worshipped from all corners of the land. Here they on earth have their conversation, Phil. iii. 20; and unto that place the tribes of God go up now worshipping God, all serving in the newness of the spirit; and there are no worshippers now but spiritual worshippers. Thus there is an end put to all controversies about earthly holy places, and temples of God made with hands." John iv. 20, 21.—JOHN GLAS.

A family may be few, but a nation must be numerous. He who joins the society here referred to, obtains a citizenship more honorable, and connecting him with a wider field of association, than the citizenship of ancient Rome in all its glory: he joins a commonwealth, of which the commonwealth of Israel, even in its most flourishing state, was but an imperfect figure. He "sits down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father." He joins "the church of the living God;" a society which, even as now existing on earth, is "a multitude," which could not easily be numbered; and he "comes also to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; an innumerable company of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect."[1]

But "a nation" is not merely a numerous body of men. It is a numerous body of men, subject to the same government, regulated by the same laws; a government and laws which distinguish it from other nations. In this sense, the appellation is strikingly descriptive of true Christians. The whole race of men, with the exception of true Christians, are the subjects of "the god of this world," the Prince of darkness. They "lie under the" dominion of that "wicked one;" they "serve divers lusts and pleasures;" they "yield themselves the servants of sin; and they yield their members," the various faculties and capacities of their nature, "to sin, as the instruments of unrighteousness."[2] Christians have been "turned" from the service of the god of this world, "to the service of the living and true God," "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." To his sovereignty, as administered by his Son, to whom he has given all power in heaven and earth, they have submitted their minds, their hearts, their consciences, their conduct. "Jehovah is their Judge; Jehovah is their Lawgiver; Jehovah is their King." "They serve the Lord Christ;" subject to his authority, they are regulated by his law. Other men regulate themselves by various principles, to which they give the authority of law; the law of interest; the law of custom; the law of honor; the law of public opinion; the law of caprice. Christians regulate themselves by the law of God. The Bible is their statute book. They are cheerfully subject to all lawful ordinances of man; but it is "for the Lord's sake;" because the Lord commands them to be so. But when the law of man is opposed to the law of God, the principle upon which they act is, "We must obey God rather than man." They are persuaded of the principle, and act on it, "No man can serve two masters; we cannot serve God and mammon." The description which Haman gave of the Jews, slightly altered, is very applicable to "the true circumcision:" They are "a people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the nations, and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the laws" of man, when these are opposed to the law of their Sovereign in heaven.[3]

Christians, also, are with propriety termed "a nation;" for they are distinguished by the same customs; and their customs are different from, and opposed to, the customs which generally prevail among

[1] Psal. cxlviii. 14. Gal. iv. 26. Psal. xci. 1. Eph. iii. 15. Matt. viii. 11. Heb. xii. 22, 23.

[2] 1 John v. 19. Rom. vi. 13.

[3] Matt. vi. 24. Esther iii. 8.

men. They all seek often to be alone; they all are given to prayer; they all "lay up treasures in heaven;" they all "deny themselves;" they all look not only, not chiefly, at their own things, but at the things of Christ, and of others. They all forgive, instead of avenging injuries.[1] These are but a specimen of their peculiar customs. Their whole mode of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting, is decidedly different from that of other men. They are in the world, but not of it.

Further, Christians, like a nation, have common and peculiar immunities and privileges. They are all made free by the Son; made "free indeed;" "free with the liberty of the children of God;" they are all "blessed with heavenly and spiritual blessings;" all "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" all secured of the guidance of the good Spirit, and the guardianship of angels.[2] By these, and a variety of other privileges, which belong to none but themselves, they are distinguished from all other bodies of men.

Like a nation, Christians have a common cause, the cause of their common Lord; common interests, the interests of truth, and holiness, and peace, of God's glory, and man's salvation. They are engaged in a war with common enemies, ignorance, error, superstition, sin in all its forms, and the powerful being of whom all these are the works. They "wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers; with the rulers of the darkness of this world; with spiritual wickedness in high places." And they carry on their war in the same way. "The weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God," for the accomplishment of their purpose.[3]

But Christians are not only a nation—they are "a holy nation." The term holy, or sacred, properly signifies separated from other persons or things, and dedicated to a sacred purpose. The Babylonian armies are termed by Isaiah God's "sanctified or holy ones,"[4] because selected by God as the instruments of his righteous judgment against Israel. The Sabbath is called holy, because set apart from secular to religious purposes; the vessels of the Tabernacle and Temple are called holy for a similar reason; and the Israelites are very often represented as holy, because separated from the rest of mankind to be the depositaries of religious truth and worship, "till the seed should come, in reference to whom the promises were made."[5]

When the word is applied to Christians either as individuals or as a body, it is employed in the same general sense, but with a higher reference. The christian church, though figuratively a nation, has nothing secular in its constitution or object. It is completely separated, completely distinct, from all worldly societies. It is not political, it is not commercial, it is not philosophical; it is religious. If it is a kingdom, it is "a kingdom not of this world;"[6] if it is a nation, it is "a holy," sacred "nation." And its genuine members are all holy, taken out from among the world lying under the wicked one; dedi-

[1] Matt. v. 20. Phil. ii. 4.
[2] John viii. 36. Eph. i. 3. James ii. 5.
[3] Eph. vi. 12. 2 Cor. x. 4.
[4] Isa. xiii. 3.
[5] Exod. xvi. 23; xxv. 2. Deut. vii. 6. Dan. viii. 24. Lev. viii. 9; xvi. 4, 33.
[6] John xviii. 36.

cated to the service of God and his Son, by the sprinkling of the blood of atonement, by the washing of the water of regeneration, and by their own inward consent and outward profession. They are all sanctified ones; "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they might be holy, and without blame before God in love." In consequence of the Saviour sanctifying himself, setting apart himself to save them, they are set apart, sanctified by the truth to serve him: for "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to God a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." "That he might sanctify the people;" that he might constitute the chosen ones a holy nation "by his own blood, he suffered without the gate." He went out of "the Jerusalem" that then was the type of all that is corrupt both in secular and ecclesiastical association, and his saved people are to "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach," devoted to God, as he was devoted to God; determined to do and suffer the will of God as he did, apart from the world lying in wickedness.[1]

They are a people *entirely* devoted or sacred; their faculties, their property, their time, their opportunities, their bodies, their spirits, are all His, and they cannot devote them to purposes different from his, without being guilty of desecration and sacrilege. It is to this state of things that the prophet Isaiah looks forward when he says, "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken;" and Zechariah, when he says, "In that day shall there be on the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." Every day is, or ought to be, a Sabbath-day; every meal a sacrament; for whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they should do all to the glory of God; "and whatsoever they do in word or in deed, they should do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him." Among them "no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether he lives, he lives to the Lord; whether he dies, he dies to the Lord. In life and in death he is the Lord's."[2]

I think it not improbable that the apostle had a particular object in giving Christians, as a body, the designation, "a holy *nation*," rather than the more ordinary phrase in the Old Testament, "a holy *people*."[3]

[1] Eph. v. 25–27. Heb. xiii. 12, 13.
[2] Isa. lxii. 10–12. Zech. xiv. 20, 21. Col. iii. 17. Rom. xiv. 7, 8.
[3] ἔθνος rather than λαός.

It is not without a purpose that he quotes Exodus xix. 6, rather than Isaiah lxii. 11. The very name nations,[1] or Gentiles, was hateful to the Jews. They were "the people;"[2] all the rest of the world were the nations: the people were holy and beloved; the nations profane and abominable in the sight of God. But under the new economy, the chosen name of the people of God is "nation," there being now no distinction between Jew and Gentile, but all are one in Christ. As the Apostle Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female;" but all "believers are one" nation "in Christ Jesus." And "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promises." The holy nation is 'God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that we should walk in them." "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"—"a holy nation."[3]

(6.) *Christians are "a peculiar people."*

The next appellation that calls for our consideration is, "a peculiar people." To a mere English reader, these words convey the idea, a perfectly just one, that they are a people, a collection of men, who have many peculiarities about them, many things which distinguish them from other men, and other bodies of men; they are peculiar in their origin, their principles, their dispositions, their habits and customs; their hopes, their fears, their pursuits, their privileges. In this case the designation would include all that is expressed in all the other designations, and perhaps something more.

But the truth is, the English expression conveys very imperfectly the meaning of the original term. It is literally "a people for a purchased possession," or for a treasure;[4] for the word employed is used in both senses; in the first, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "Until the redemption of the purchased possession;"[5] in the second, in the passage of the book of Exodus, from which this is quoted, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me."[6] In Malachi it is rendered "jewels,"

[1] גוי. [2] עם. [3] Gal. iii. 28, 29. Eph. ii. 10–19.
[4] Λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν. [5] Eph. i. 14. [6] Exod. xix. 5.

and on the margin, "special treasure."[1] The significancy here does not lie chiefly, if at all, in the word "people," which does not, like generation or race, kingdom and nation, suggest any important idea; though people does seem to be used as distinctive of a respectable assembly, in opposition to an illiterate and vulgar rabble. "No doubt ye are the *people*."[2] It lies in what is said about his people. They are a people "for a purchased possession," for a special treasure. The sentiments which the appellation seems intended to convey are these two: That they are the subjects of the divine peculiar property, and the objects of the divine peculiar regard.

They are God's "purchased possession," his "special treasure." Like the preceding appellation, this was originally employed as descriptive of the Israelitish people. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine." "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people to himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth." "The Lord hath avouched thee to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised to thee."[3] The whole universe is God's inalienable property. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell in it."[4] All the nations were God's property; but, so far as the thing was possible, they had alienated themselves as divine property. They had given themselves up into the hands of God's enemy, to be used by him as his property. But Jehovah, while allowing the other nations to remain in the hands of him to whom they had sold themselves, rescued Israel out of the hands of Pharaoh, and out of the hand of him of whom Pharaoh was but a type and instrument, and they became, as it were, doubly his property, and he treated them as an object of "peculiar favor." "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel! for the Lord's *portion* was his people; Israel was the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him to ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat: and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape." "He showed his word to Jacob, his statutes and his judgments to Israel." "In Judah was he known; his name was great in Israel. In Salem also was his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion. And "many times did he deliver them." "He gave Egypt for their ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for them." "He suffered no man to do them wrong" with impunity; "he reproved kings for their sake." "What nation was there so great, who had Jehovah so nigh to them, as the Lord their God was in all things

[1] Mal. iii. 16.
[2] Job xii. 2.
[3] Exod. xix. 5. Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2; xxvi. 18.
[4] Psal. xxiv. 1.

that they called on him for?" "What nation was there so great, that had statutes and judgments so righteous as all the law, which he set before them?" [1] Thus was ancient Israel, a people for a purchased possession, for a special treasure to Jehovah, the subjects of his peculiar property, the objects of his peculiar regard.

But these glorious appellations are applicable in a far higher sense to the spiritual Israel. They are God's peculiar property. They are his in a sense different from, higher than, that in which they originally and all other human beings were his. It is difficult to find in human affairs anything that so corresponds to the important facts referred to, as to illustrate them; but we shall attempt it. Let us conceive what we know is not possible, that a wealthy man should have righteous property in a great multitude of his fellow-men, and let us conceive of him as just and kind in his dealings with them; but they commit crimes which expose them to the vengeance of the law, and they at the same time renounce subjection to him, and become the willing slaves of his worst enemy. Having a great regard for them, he buys them off from the law's vengeance; and he at the same time prevails on them to wish to return to his service; and by superior force obliges his powerful enemy, however reluctantly, to quit his hold of them; and, having got them again back to his own estate, he bestows on them peculiar marks of his kindness. Would not such redeemed criminals, such ransomed slaves, though his property originally, be now doubly his—his purchased possession; and might they not well be called his special treasure? The figure is imperfect, but it may assist your minds in forming distinct and accurate conceptions of the case before us. Christians have been "redeemed by the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and spot," from guilt, the judicial displeasure of God, and everlasting destruction. They have been "bought with a price." "Redeemed to God by the blood of his Son; delivered from the wrath to come." And they have also been, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," delivered from sin and Satan, and the present evil world; "redeemed from all iniquity, that they may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works." By the effectual working of the good Spirit through the instrumentality of the word, they are freed from the degrading bondage of sin, and made to "walk at liberty, keeping God's commandments;" feeling, and delighting to feel, that they are "not their own," but wholly and forever his, who has bought them by "a price all price beyond:" redeemed them by an arm so "full of power" and of mercy.[2]

And as they are the subjects of his peculiar property, so are they the objects of his peculiar regard. They are his special treasure, his jewels; he heaps on them tokens of his regard. They are his vineyard; of which he says, "I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment. I will keep it night and day." He "blesses them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings;" so that they may well say, "Who is a God like unto our God, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retain-

[1] Deut. xxxii. 8–14. Psal. cxlvii. 19; lxxvi. 1, 2; cvi. 43. Isa. xliii. 3. Psal. cv. 14, 15. Deut. iv. 7, 8.

[2] 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Rev. v. 9. 1 Thess. i. 10. Tit. ii. 14.

eth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion on us; he will subdue our iniquities; and he will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." "The Lord their God, in the midst of them, is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over them with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over them with singing." "He giveth unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand." He gives many distinct proofs, both to others and to themselves, that they are the objects of his peculiar regard. "All things are theirs, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, whether in life, or death; all is theirs; for they are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Even in the present state, he makes it evident that the Lord hath set apart the godly man for himself, and "in the day that he shall make up his jewels," collect his treasure, he will bestow on them such "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory," as shall make all the intelligent universe see and acknowledge that they are His: in a peculiar sense his property, his portion; those whom he is determined to honor and bless, to the greatest degree in which created beings can be made possessors of dignity and blessedness.[1]

And all the glory, all the felicity, included in God treating them as a people for a purchased possession, a peculiar treasure, is obtained by connection with Christ, and is a farther demonstration of his grace to those on whom it is bestowed. In coming to Christ ye were made such a people, and in this surely "ye have tasted that the Lord was gracious."

Is it possible to estimate too highly those honors, and advantages, and delights, to which Christians are, by the grace of their Lord, raised? Is it not obviously and undeniably true, that "the things which God laid up for those who love him," under the new economy, and which he has made known to us by his Holy Spirit, are what "eye had not seen, what ear had not heard, and what it had never entered," it could never have entered, "into the heart of man to conceive?"[2] How glorious is the society they are connected with, embracing in it all the true excellence in the universe! They are, indeed, associates of no ignoble confraternity, citizens of no mean city; and how rich, how varied, how invaluable, are the privileges which, as members of the holy nation, of the peculiar people, they enjoy!

How strong a motive to gratitude, and obedience, and submission! Well does it become every Christian, "gathered from among the heathen," and "made to inherit the throne of glory," to say with David, "Who am I, and what is my Father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? Truly, O Lord, I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will take the cup of salvation. I will call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people." Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from my vain conversation, I will no longer fashion myself according to my former lusts in my ignorance; but as he who has

[1] Isa. xxvii. 2, 3. Eph. i. 3. Micah vii. 18, 19. Zeph. iii. 17. John x. 28. 1 Cor. iii. 21–23. Mal. iii. 17 18.

[2] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

called me is holy, I will be holy in all manner of conversation. Bought with a price, I am not my own, and will glorify him who redeemed me, in my body, and in my spirit, which are His.[1]

What an abundant source of consolation and support under evil, of every kind, does this view of the Christian's situation afford to him! Jehovah will take care of his own, of what is committed to him, of what has been redeemed by the blood of his Son, rescued by the power of his Spirit, blessed with the tokens of his peculiar regard. Fear not, Christian, whatever may be the number and amount of thy experienced or anticipated perplexities and trials, and bereavements and sorrows. Listen to the voice of Him, whose thou art, and whom thou servest: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle on thee. For I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." And when He thus says, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee; surely thou mayest boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what either man or devil can do to me."[2]

What a powerful incentive is here offered to seek "part and lot" in this holy nation, among this peculiar people! All who belong to it were once "aliens from the commonwealth of the spiritual Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise." They were as "sheep going astray; but they have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." And how were they brought near? By the blood of the cross, by the power of the Spirit, by the faith of the truth. They believed on Christ, they came to him, and thus "they tasted that the Lord is gracious." Does not their happiness proclaim, louder than any language, "O, taste and see that the Lord is good?" The way, though, alas! unfrequented, is an open one. The grace of the Lord is not "a well shut up, a fountain sealed." "Return, ye backsliding children; I have redeemed you." "I, even I, am he who blotted out transgressions, for my own sake." "I will heal your backsliding, I will love you freely." Believe the truth as it is in Jesus, come to Him, and all the blessings of salvation are yours. "He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son hath not life." "Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It may, it must be yours, if you do not obstinately refuse to receive what is freely given us of God;[3] refuse, neglect, to receive it, and you are undone forever, and must receive what you have earned: "the wages of sin—*death;*"

> "Future death,
> And death still future. Not a hasty stroke,
> Like that which sends us to the dusty grave:
> But unrepealable, enduring death—
> Ages of future misery."[4]

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[1] 2 Sam. vii. 18. Psal. cxvi. 12–14. 1 Cor. vi. 20.
[2] Isa. xli. 10; xliii. 2. Heb. xiii. 5, 6.
[3] 1 Pet. ii. 25. Jer. iii. 14, 22. Isa. xliii. 25. Hos. xiv. 4. 1 John v. 12. Rom. vi. 23.
[4] Cowper.

Escape then, from the city of destruction; break off all connection with "the sinful nation," "the people of God's curse." "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain," to the city of refuge, the mystical Jerusalem, whose name is Jehovah-Tzidkenu, "the Lord our righteousness." Escape lest thou be consumed; delay is madness, may be ruin: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."[1]

The statements now made have not produced their proper effect if they have not excited in our bosoms an earnest desire, which finds its appropriate utterance in these beautiful words of the psalmist, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor which thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, the chosen generation; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, the holy nation; that I may glory with thine inheritance," "the peculiar people, the purchased possession, the special treasure"[2] That prayer, offered in faith, is sure to be answered; and that prayer offered and answered, we are made up for eternity. "We have all and abound." Our need is supplied according to God's glorious riches. We have "exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Our joy is full, full forever.

(7.) *Christians are "called to show forth the praises of God."*

The next appellation applied to Christians is, "Called to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." To the consideration of this let us now proceed.

The allusion to ancient Israel, which pervades the previous part of the verse, and attention to which we have found of so much use to bring out its meaning, is to be recognized here also. Jehovah called Israel out of Egypt, a state of slavery and degradation, figuratively termed by the psalmist "a state of darkness and the shadow of death," into a state of liberty and dignity, figuratively described as "the light of the countenance of Jehovah," probably with a reference to the supernatural bright cloud, the emblem of the divine presence, to be to himself "a chosen generation, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a peculiar people," in order to manifest by them his own infinite excellencies, his power, his wisdom, his righteousness, his benignity, his faithfulness. When God "went to redeem Israel for a people to himself, it was to make to himself a name."[3] When "he brought them up out of the sea," to use the sublime language of Isaiah, "with Moses, the shepherd of his flock, when he put his Holy Spirit within him, and led them by his right hand, dividing the waters before him, it was to make to himself an everlasting, a glorious name."[4] And of Israel, thus called and redeemed by him, he says, "I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." I have caused to cleave to me, says Jehovah by the prophet Jeremiah, "I have caused to cleave to me the whole house of

[1] Gen. xix. 17. Jer. xxxiii. 16. Isa. xlix. 8. 2 Cor. vi. 2.

[2] Psal. cvi. 4, 5.

[3] 2 Sam. vii. 23.

[4] Isa. lxiii. 11, 12. "Respectus habetur ad caput xv. Exodi, in quo describitur canticum laudis quod Israelitæ post eductionem ex Egypto per mare rubrum, in gloriam Dei liberatoris composuerunt."—Beda.

Israel and the whole house of Judah; that they may be to me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory."[1]

The great economies of Providence and Redemption form but one system of divine manifestation; a connected series of revelations of "eternal power and godhead;" the infinite wisdom, righteousness, and benignity of Him, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things." The Mosaic economy, the history of the Israelitish people, is a very interesting chapter in this book, in which God has manifested his character. All that God did for Israel in making them a nation; all the privileges he bestowed on them as a nation; all the deliverances he vouchsafed them, and all the judgments he inflicted on them: all that he did to them, and all that he did by them, was intended for the revelation of his character, for the manifestation of his glory. Israel became to him a chosen generation; a kingdom of priests; a holy nation; a peculiar people; to show forth his praise. His dispensations to Israel manifested his character, not only to them, but to surrounding nations. He made "his wrath and his power," his wisdom and his mercy, known in the redemption of Israel, and in the destruction of their proud oppressors. "He saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known, and that men might know that he was Jehovah." And this was not only their design and tendency, it was to some extent their effect. Jethro was not at all singular in the sentiments he avowed in his address to his son-in-law: "Now know I that Jehovah is greater than all gods; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them."[2]

Israel was intended, not merely passively, but also actively, to declare the character, to show forth the praises, of Jehovah. While the nations around them were "worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator; having changed the truth of God into a lie, and his glory into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and to creeping things,"[3] throughout the land of Israel was proclaimed the sublime truth, "Jehovah is our God, Jehovah is one." They were his "witnesses;" and in the holy oracles, which they preserved most faithfully; in the ordinances of worship which they maintained; and in the degree in which their characters were moulded by that revelation, and those ordinances, did they shine as the lights of a darkened world, and hold forth to their benighted fellow-men the truth respecting the Supreme Being.

These observations respecting the manner in which ancient Israel, after the flesh, was called by Jehovah out of darkness into light, to be a chosen generation, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a peculiar people, in order to show forth his praise, will be found of material use to us in our inquiry into the higher sense, the deeper meaning, in which these statements are applicable to the spiritual Israel.

Taking them as our key, let us now proceed to ask, What is this calling here spoken of? Who is its author? What is its object? And how does such a call from such a being, for such an object, afford illustration of the graciousness of the Lord to those who receive it?

[1] Isa. xliii. 7. Jer. xiii. 11. [2] Exod. xviii. 11. [3] Rom. i. 21–25.

To the first of these questions the answer is short and easy. As the calling of ancient Israel was the divine command and invitation, by Moses, to leave Egypt, and enter on the privileges and duties of God's peculiar people, first in the wilderness, and then in Canaan, a calling made effectual by a series of divine interpositions; so the calling of the spiritual Israel, is the divine call and invitation to enter, through the belief of the truth, on the privileges and duties of his spiritual, peculiar people, first on earth, then in heaven. It is this invitation, rendered effectual by the operation of the good Spirit leading them to comply with it, which the apostle calls the Christian's "high" and "heavenly," "holy" and "hopeful" "calling not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;" "a calling into the fellowship of God's Son," whereby we, who were the children of the devil, become, like Him, the children of God; we, who were vile and debased, "without God," "far from God," become, like Him, "kings and priests to God;" we, who were profane and of the world, become in our measure, like Him, the Holy One of God; we, who had denied God's property in us, and who were the fit objects of his judicial displeasure, and moral disapprobation, become, like Him, the subjects of his peculiar property, the objects of his special love. This is the effectual calling, so well described in our Shorter Catechism, as "the work of God's Holy Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to us in the gospel," and thus enter on the enjoyment of all the blessings of the "redemption that is in him."[1]

It is equally easy to answer the question, Who is the author of this calling? There is no mistaking who He is, who is described as "He who called Christians out of darkness into his marvellous light." At first sight we might perhaps suppose, that this is a descriptive appellation of our Lord Jesus Christ. But when we look at the passages of Scripture where this calling is mentioned, and they are numerous, we shall come to the conclusion that it is God the Father, who, in the whole restorative economy, sustains the majesty of the Divinity. In the new creation, "all things are of God, through Christ Jesus,"[2] by the Spirit. The call to ancient Israel, was the call of Jehovah by Moses. The call to the spiritual Israel, is the call of Jehovah by Jesus, speaking in his word, working by his Spirit. His call alone is effectual. His word is the word that "leaps forth at once into effect; that calls for things that be not, and they are;" the word, that makes men what it calls them to be.

The third question, What is the design of this calling? will require a somewhat more detailed reply. They are called to "show forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." The word "praises" is more literally rendered in the margin, as you may observe, "virtues."[3] It is a general name for the excellencies of the Divine Being, His power and wisdom, and holiness, and benignity, especially as displayed in calling them, and in the

[1] Phil. iii. 14. Heb. iii. 1. 2 Tim. i. 9. Eph. i. 18; iv. 4. Short. Cat. Q. 31.
[2] 2 Cor. v. 18.
[3] ἀρετάς.

privileges, honors, and blessings, to which they are called. The design, then, of calling Christians to the enjoyment of their peculiar privileges, was, that the excellencies of the Divine Author of their calling might be displayed. This is the great ultimate end of God in everything: the manifestation of his own excellence. "The Lord hath made all things for himself."[1] "To him," as well as "of him, and through him, are all things." "For him," as well as "by him, are all things."[2]

There is no end so grand, so comprehensive of all other desirable ends, so worthy of the all-perfect Being, as this. "The highest agent cannot work but for the highest end; so that, as the apostle speaks, when God would confirm his covenant by an oath, he swears by himself, because he could swear by no greater; so in all, he must be the end of his own actions, because there is no greater nor better end; yea, none by infinite odds, so great or good."[3] It is plain, that just in the degree that God manifests his power, and wisdom, and goodness, must the order and happiness of the inanimate and sensitive creation be promoted; and just in the degree in which his moral excellencies are displayed to rightly constituted, intelligent beings, must their happiness be increased. The more they know of God, the more they love God, as known; the more they are conformed to God, the holier and the happier are they.

Christians, as the called of God, are intended to show forth the excellencies of God, both passively and actively. Those wonderful dispensations of power, and righteousness, and benignity, the incarnation and sacrifice of the divine Son, and the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit, are the most remarkable displays which probably ever have been, or ever will be, made to the intelligent universe of "the virtues," the powers, the excellencies, of the divine character. Everything else, when compared with these, may be termed, to use the prophet Habakkuk's expression, "the hiding" rather than the manifestation of his excellencies. If a man wishes to know the true character of God, let him study it as embodied in these dispensations; let him look at God in Christ; "the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus."[4] We know that they were intended to serve this purpose, not only to men, but to higher orders of intelligent beings. We know that such things took place, "to the intent, that unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, might be made known by," through means of, "the church," the called ones, the chosen generation, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people, not only "the manifold wisdom of God,"[5] but the riches of his grace, the exceeding greatness of his power, the unfathomable depth of his knowledge, the immutability of his purpose, the energy of his wrath, the omnipotence of his love.

And we know, too, they answer this purpose. They awaken the holy curiosity of those exalted holy spirits; and though they feel their highest powers overtasked in the study, "into these things they desire to look."[6] They discover in Jehovah a depth of excellence, which, though they believed it to exist, they had never seen before exhibited, and they had never distinctly before conceived of. Forms of moral

[1] Prov. xvi. 4. [2] Rom. xi. 36. Heb. ii. 10. [3] Leighton.
[4] Hab. iii. iv. 2 Cor. v. 19; iv. 6. [5] Eph. iii. 10. [6] 1 Pet. i. 12.

loveliness present themselves to their minds, more beautiful than any they had ever imagined; they burn with a more intense devotion; they are penetrated with a higher sense of entire confidence in the All-excellent One; the salvation of man thus adding to the happiness of angels. So glorious is the illustration that is given of the Divine character in these dispensations, that the inspired prophet, when contemplating it, breaks out into those rapturous strains,—"I have blotted out," says Jehovah to the spiritual Israel, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return to me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing," exclaims the prophet, "O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."[1] And this is true, not only with regard to the grand dispensations in which all the called ones are equally interested; but the individual history of each of them is a mirror, in which "the ministering spirits who minister to them, as heirs of salvation," see reflected the excellencies of Him who works all for them, in them, and by them.

But the called ones are not merely passive instruments; they are agents in showing forth Jehovah's praise. The manifestation of God made to them in their calling, and the privileges into which it conducts them, produce in their minds just views of the Divine character, and a corresponding mode of thinking and feeling, and speaking, and acting, so that they cannot but show forth the praises of Him who has called them. This is the great design of God in giving them the privilege. If they are "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," it is "that they might be to the praise of the glory of his grace."[2] If they are planted by him as "trees of righteousness," it is "that he might be glorified."[3] If they are "bought with a price," it is that they may "glorify Him with their souls, and with their bodies, which are his."[4] If they are "filled with the fruits of righteousness," it is "to the praise and glory of God."[5] If they "obtain the inheritance," it is "to the praise of his glory." If "the purchased possession" at last is redeemed completely and forever from all evil, still it is "to the praise of His glory."[6]

How the holy, heavenly temper and conduct of the called ones answer the great purpose of their calling, is very beautifully described by Archbishop Leighton:—"The virtues that are in them tell us of His virtues, as brooks lead us to their springs. When a Christian can quietly repose and trust on God in a matter of very great difficulty, wherein there is no other thing to stay him but God alone: this declares plainer than words that there is strength enough in God that bears him up; that there must be in him that real abundance of goodness and truth that the word speaks of him. Abraham believed and gave glory to God: this is what every believer can do to declare the truth of God. He can rely, and show that he relies, on it, and thus set to his seal that God is true. Men hear that there is a God who

[1] Isa. xliv. 22, 23. [2] Eph. i. 5. [3] Isa. lxi. 3.
[4] 1 Cor. vi. 20. [5] Phil. i. 11. [6] Eph. i. 11–14.

is infinitely holy, but they can neither see him nor his holiness; but when they perceive some lineaments of it in the faces of his children which are in none others, this may convince them that it is perfection, which must be somewhere, can be nowhere else but in their heavenly Father. When those that are his peculiar plants bring forth the fruits of holiness, which naturally they yielded not, it testifies a supernatural work of his hand that planted them, and the more fruitful they are, the greater his praise: 'Herein is my Father glorified,' says our Saviour, 'that ye bring forth much fruit.'"[1] Their lives on earth should be a hymn of praise to him who called them; and we know that in heaven, throughout eternity, they rest not day nor night; but in a manner suited to their enlarged capacities and exalted station, without interruption "show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into marvellous light:" "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and art, and art to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."[2]

It only remains that we say a word or two on the manifestation of the graciousness of the Lord to Christians, afforded by their being called to show forth the praises of him who called them. To be made capable of, disposed to, and actually to be employed in, showing forth the praises of Jehovah, is the highest dignity and happiness which can be conferred on created intelligent beings. This was the happiness of man in Paradise; this is the essence of the happiness of the blessed in heaven. "It is," indeed, to refer to the description of man's original state by a master mind,[3] equally applicable to man's restored state,—"It is a most delectable and pleasant state to be separated to the entertainment of the divine presence, and the manifestation of the divine glory: 'Thou art mine, and for me thou livest. Thee, above all my works, I choose out for myself. Thine employment shall be no laborious, painful drudgery, unless it can be painful to receive the large communications of immense goodness, light, life, and love, that shall of their own accord be perpetually flowing in upon thee, and to express in thy whole character and conduct thy sense of my infinite greatness and goodness!'" Surely this is a high privilege; and as, like all the privileges of Christians, it is enjoyed only in Christ Jesus in consequence of believing on him, coming to him, building on him; as it not more certainly comes from God than it comes by Christ; as, but for his mediation, this honor, this blessedness, could never have found its way to one of our fallen race; we may well say, that in enjoying it, Christians "taste that the Lord is gracious."

It becomes the called of the Lord to avail themselves of the privileges, and to perform the duties, of their high, and holy, and heavenly calling. By your lips, by your lives, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," honor Him who has called you, Him into whose fellowship you have been called. "God's dear Son" did so. Yes, "he glorified his Father on the earth; he finished the work he gave him to do." His most ardent prayer was, "Father, glorify thy Son,

[1] John. xv. 8. [2] Rev. iv. 8, 11. [3] Howe.

that thy Son also may glorify thee." Nothing could shake his determination as to this: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?" Shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour?" No; "for this cause I came to this hour." I will say, "Father, glorify thy name."[1] And now in heaven he declares his Father's name to his brethren, and in the great congregation he shows forth his praise.[2]

"Let this mind be in you that was in him." "Praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent: his glory is above the earth and heaven. He exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near to him. "Praise ye the Lord, for he is good; sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant. For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure." "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord." "Praise the Lord, call on his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." "Publish with the voice of thanksgiving, tell of all his wondrous works." Let every called, redeemed one, adopt the psalmist's resolution: "I will praise thee, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing, O thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed." "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy towards me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have any being. My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord."[3] O what a heaven on earth might, would Christians have, were they acting worthy of their high and holy calling, as a holy priesthood, "offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to his name."

But are all here among "the called, and chosen, and faithful?"[4] Would God it were so. But I more than fear that there are persons here, who, though called, often called, affectionately, earnestly called, have never been effectually called; who are yet without the pale of the chosen race, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people, having no part nor lot in their peculiar privileges. For this class we ought to feel the deepest commiseration, the tenderest pity; and the best way of showing this is to endeavor to make them understand their real position. My dear fellow immortals, there can be no doubt your duty is to show forth the praises of God. That is the first duty of every intelligent creature, and nothing can release you from its obligation. God will be glorified in you whether you will or not. If you will not give him glory, he will make your rebellion and its fearful consequences praise him. How loud is the acclaim

[1] John xvii. 1, 4; xii. 27, 28. [2] Psal. xxii. 22. Heb. ii. 12.
[3] Psal. cxlviii. 13, 14; cxxxv. 3, 4, 19, 20. Isa. xii. 4–6. Psal. xxvi. 7; lxxi. 22, 23; lxxxvi. 12, 13; civ. 33, 34.
[4] Heb. xiii. 15. Rev. xvii. 14.

which rises among the holy part of God's intelligent creation, "when the smoke of the torment," of the irreclaimably wicked, "ascendeth up forever and ever!" "Alleluia; and again they cry, Alleluia." "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, O King of Saints!" "Righteous is Jehovah, and righteous are his judgments." [1] In your present state you are morally incapable of praising God or glorifying his name. You never will do anything really glorifying to God, till, casting down the weapons of rebellion against him, you, in the faith of the truth, "kiss the Son," whom he has "set as his King on his holy hill of Zion." [2] Listen to the call, come to Jesus, glorify God by crediting the testimony he has given of a free and full salvation in his Son for the chief of sinners; and then, not till then, "tasting that the Lord is gracious," will you find yourselves sweetly constrained to devote yourselves entirely to the honor of Him, whom you will then see and feel to be infinitely excellent, amiable, and kind, the Saviour, your Saviour. You will no longer be able to "live to yourselves," to make self your great object. God will appear to be what he is—"all in all;" and this will be your resolution, and your rejoicing, "Whether I live, I live to the Lord; whether I die, I die to the Lord: living and dying I am the Lord's. Whether I eat, or drink, or whatsoever I do, I will do all to the glory of God. Whatever I do, whether in word or deed, I will do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father." "My mouth shall speak the praises of the Lord: and let *all flesh* bless his holy name forever and ever." "Oh that there were in you such a heart to honor God, that it might be well with you forever." [3] It cannot be well with you otherwise, either in time or eternity.

(8.) *Christians are "called out of darkness into God's marvellous light."*

The next descriptive designation of true Christians which presents itself to our consideration is, "Called out of darkness into God's marvellous light." The language is obviously figurative; and here, as in every similar case, the first thing to be done is to endeavor to obtain a distinct idea of the figure employed. This is obviously necessary in order to our satisfactorily arriving at the thought it is intended to convey. The general meaning of the expression is plain. The appellation describes Christians as brought by divine agency from a very miserable into a very desirable state. But to ascertain the nature of the wretchedness of the one state, and the happiness of the other, it is requisite that we know something as to the darkness to which the one, and the light to which the other, is compared.

It has been supposed by some that the figure here is that which is employed by the psalmist to describe one class of the deliverances which the redeemed of the Lord are called on to acknowledge as a proof that he is good, that his mercy endureth forever; deliverance from the darkness of a dungeon, and restoration to the healthful air and the blessed light of heaven.[4] And thus considered it would afford

[1] Rev. xix. 3; xv. 3; xix. 2. [2] Psal. ii. 6, 12.
[3] Rom. xiv. 8. 1 Cor. x. 31. Col. iii. 17. Psal. cxlv. 22. Deut. v. 29.
[4] Psal. cvii. 10–14.

a very instructive view of the state of Christians, both before and after their believing on, coming to, building on Christ.

I cannot help thinking, however, that, as in all the other descriptive designations of Christians in this beautiful passage, there is a reference to something in the history or situation of the ancient people of God; the figure here, too, is drawn from the same prolific source of illustrations of christian truth. I apprehend it refers to the remarkable event, their deliverance from Egypt, which led to their becoming the select race, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people. God "called Israel out of Egypt," [1] and called them out of Egypt to make them a peculiar people to himself. But how should the call out of Egypt be represented as a call "out of darkness into light," "God's light," "God's marvellous light?" A slight attention to the circumstances of the deliverance from Egypt, will enable us to answer this question.

Egypt was enveloped in midnight darkness, made tenfold more terrible by the last and severest of all its plagues, the death of the first-born of man and beast, when Israel was called by God to leave that scene of his degradation and suffering. On the evening of the tenth day of the month Abib, the Israelites having by divine command made preparations for departure, in each of their families slew a lamb and sprinkled its blood on the posts and lintels of the doors of their dwellings. They hastily ate the roasted lamb, with their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands. At the dark hour of midnight the destroying angel accomplished at one stroke his awful work. "From the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on the throne, unto the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon," all—all became his victims. Nor was even the brute creation exempted from the general plague. "There was a great cry in Egypt;" for there was not a house, except the blood-sprinkled habitations of Israel, where there was not one dead. It was the voice of Jehovah, though uttered by the mouth of Pharaoh, that proclaimed, amid the darkness and death of that night, "Rise up, and get you forth!" From amidst this fearful darkness, meet emblem of the miseries they had endured, "Jehovah calleth his people." [2]

And as he "called them out of darkness," so he "called them into his marvellous light." That was a night much to be remembered; for when God called his people from Egypt, "he went before them by night as a pillar of fire, to give them light, to lead them in the way." Thus "he sent darkness, and made it dark. He smote also all the first-born in their land, the chief of their strength. He brought forth his people with silver and gold. Egypt was glad when they departed. He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night." [3] Thus did God call his ancient people "out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Such, we apprehend, is the figure: now for its interpretation. What is the darkness out of which the spiritual Israel is delivered? What the marvellous light into the midst of which they are brought to dwell? It has often been said that the one is the emblem of the absolute darkness of Heathenism, or the comparative darkness of

[1] Hos. xi. 11. [2] Exod. xii. *passim.* [3] Psal. cv. 28, 36–39.

Judaism, and the other of the pure light of the gospel dispensation. There can be no doubt that the persons directly addressed were delivered out of the former, and were introduced into the latter; but we mistake much, if both the darkness and the light here be not rather subjective than objective, rather that which reigns within than that which prevails without. Like the parallel expression, "Once were ye darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord," the expression in the text refers to the darkness of the unregenerate state, and the light of the renewed mind. It describes what the New Testament represents as so important, "repentance towards God," a change of mind.[1]

The darkness out of which Christians are brought at their conversion, is a state in which the sun of the intelligent world, GOD, who is "light, and in whom there is no darkness at all," "the Father of lights," the Author of true knowledge, holiness, and happiness, does not shine; in other words, where ignorance and error with regard to God, and therefore with regard to everything of importance in a religious and moral point of view, prevail; and in which, of consequence, there is, there can be, no true holiness; in which there is, and must be, depravity; and in which, in consequence of this error, and ignorance, and depravity, there is, there can be, no true solid happiness; where there is, and must be *misery*, in the highest sense in which that word can be applied to a being like man. This is the darkness in which Christians, in common with the rest of the race, are naturally involved; and this is the darkness out of which they are called by God. There is the less necessity for our dwelling on this part of the subject, as I have already had occasion, when describing the various aspects of the state of Christians, previously to their connection with Christ, exhibited in the text, to illustrate their state of moral darkness, in its threefold phases of ignorance, depravity, and misery.[2]

Let us rather turn our attention to the more grateful object of contemplation, that state of light, divine light, marvellous divine light, into which Christians are called by God: "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus," is made to "shine in the mind;"[3] that is, in plain words, the individual, by being brought, under divine influence, to understand and believe the revelation of the holy and benignant character of God, made in that gospel which contains an account of the person and work of him, the only begotten of God, who is the revealer of the Father, attains just views of God, which necessarily lead to just views on all other subjects, specially interesting to man as a religious and moral being. He no longer "walks in darkness, but has the light of life." He knows and is sure "that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him." He knows, and is sure, that he is "glorious in holiness, and rich in mercy;" that he is "the just God and the Saviour;" "just and the justifier of the ungodly believing in Jesus;" "God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; not imputing to men their trespasses, seeing he has made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

[1] Eph. v. 8. Acts xx. 21. [2] *Vide* Part I. § 2. [3] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

He "knows the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent."[1] And this glorious light dispels the surrounding darkness, it corrects a thousand mistakes, clears up a thousand difficulties; as the sun not only enables us to see itself, but everything else.

This light of knowledge is also the light of purity. It is a light which has heat with it, producing the blossoms of holy affection, the fruits of holy conduct. When God is truly known, sanctifying virtue comes forth from him. The love of God, the seminal principle, the concentrated essence of holiness in intelligent creatures, is the natural result of this knowledge of God. What is the knowledge we have been describing, but such an apprehension of the Divine mind and will as makes it our mind and will; and what is this but holiness, for what is holiness in an intelligent creature, but conformity of mind and will to the Holy, Holy, Holy One? This is very beautifully illustrated by the apostle: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as the children of light; for the fruit of the light (for such is the true reading), the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness, and truth."[2] In another passage, he employs another and still more striking image: We all, with unveiled faces, like mirrors, exposed to the glory of the Lord, are made glorious by that which is glorious, the glory of God in the face of his Son; we reflect his light, and thus ourselves become luminous. Through his shining on us, we ourselves shine.[3]

This light is productive of rational joy, permanent happiness, as well as of knowledge and of holiness. The truth respecting the Divine character cannot be known by man without producing happiness: "It is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent:" "Blessed are the people who know that joyful sound, 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth go before thy face.' Blessed are the people who know this joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." All the holy affections which naturally grow out of the knowledge and faith of the truth, are so many wells of living water, springing up to eternal life. "Light is sown," shed forth, its rays scattered, like the seed from the hand of the sower, "on the righteous, and gladness on the upright in heart." To love God, to fear God, to trust in God, are most delightful exercises.[4]

Such is, I apprehend, in its great leading lineaments, that state of light into which Christians are called by God, a state of knowledge, holiness, and happiness. This light is not perfect in this present world, but it is real, and it is progressive and inextinguishable. It is not like "the light of the wicked," the blaze of thorns, or the deceitful wild-fire, which "shall be darkened;" it is like "the shining light," the sun in the heavens, "which shines more and more unto the per-

[1] John viii. 12. Heb. xi. 6. Exod. xv. 11. Eph. ii. 4. Isa. xlv. 21. Rom. iii. 26. 2 Cor. v. 19–21. John xvii. 3.

[2] Eph. v. 8. Ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτὸς (not πνεύματος as in the textus receptus) ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθωσύνῃ κ. τ. λ.

[3] 2 Cor. iii. 18. [4] John xvii. 3. Psal. lxxxix. 14–16. Psal. xcvii. 7.

fect day."[1] As the pious Archbishop says, 'There is a bright morning, without cloud, which will arise. The saints have not only light to lead them in their journey, but much purer light at home, an inheritance in light. The land where their inheritance lieth is full of light, and their inheritance itself is light. The vision of God, the seeing him as he is, and the being like him, in consequence of seeing him as he is; that inheritance, the celestial city, has no need of the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light of it. That uncreated light is the happiness of our soul; the beginnings of it are our begun happiness. They are beams of it sent from above to lead us to the fountain and fulness of it. 'With thee,' says David, 'is the fountain of life; and in thy light shall we see light.'"[2]

This "light," this state of knowledge, holiness, and happiness, into which Christians are called, is termed "God's light." "Called out of darkness into his light." It is his; for he is its Author. He is "the Father of lights; from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift."[3] This is not a light produced by a fire of man's own kindling. It is not knowledge, moral improvement, and happiness, obtained by the exercise of his natural faculties of intelligence and action. It is the work, it is the gift of God. "It is God the Lord who hath showed us light," and who, too, hath opened our blind eyes, to "give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son."[4] He did the great works in which his holiness and grace were made known; He made the revelation in which these glorious deeds are recorded; He opens the understanding to understand this revelation; and He opens the heart to love it, so that we are enlightened, and purified, and blessed by it. It is thus His, as he is the author of it; and it is His, too, as he is the subject of it. Yes, God is "all in all" of this light. It is God known that makes us wise; God conformed to that makes us holy; God enjoyed that makes us happy. Jehovah is the light of his people, not only the Author, but the essence of their happiness.

This light, this state of knowledge, purity, and happiness, is also termed marvellous, "God's marvellous," strange, wonderful "light." The light which emblematized it, the pillar of fire, was a marvellous light. It was supernatural, and so is this light. "It is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous" in the eyes of all who behold it. It produces marvellous effects, enabling us to see things invisible and eternal; and by its brightness, casting into the shade things seen and temporal, it enables us to "see the King in his beauty, and to behold the land which is afar off."[5] It enables us to penetrate into the true characters of objects, and to distinguish shadows from realities, and realities from shadows. It converts a spiritual waste into the garden of the Lord, blooming with beauty, rich in the fruits of righteousness:

"Struck by that light, the human heart—
A barren soil no more,

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[1] Job xviii. 5. Prov. iv. 18. [2] Psal. xxxvi. 9. [3] James i. 17.
[4] Psal. cxviii. 27. 2 Cor. iv. 6. [5] Psal. cxviii. 23. Isa. xxxiii. 17.

Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurk'd before.
The soul—a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain—
Feels a new empire form'd within,
And owns a heavenly reign."

(9.) *Christians are "the people of God."*

The next appellation to which our attention must be turned is "the people of God." "Who were not a people," but now are "the people of God." In these words there is an obvious reference to the following remarkable passages in the book of the prophet Hosea: "In the place where it was said to them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." "I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."[1] These words, as they occur in the Old Testament Scriptures, plainly refer to the ten tribes, who, in consequence of their idolatries, were to be delivered up to a long captivity; and not only deprived of all external marks of the Divine peculiar favor, but visited with very distinct evidences of the divine judicial displeasure; driven from their own land; "abiding for many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." At a period, which we believe still to be future, these outcasts are to "return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."[2] Then they who have long not been a people, but a collection of wanderers among the nations, shall become, and be made to appear to be, as a nation, the peculiar objects of the Divine favor, the people of the Lord.

The general meaning of the statement in the text is, that the previous state of Christians resembled that of the outcast remnant of Israel; that they were not a people, and that their present state embraces in it all the dignities and advantages of which the dignities and advantages of Israel, the ancient people of God, were a type and emblem. Previously to their coming to Christ, they were "not a people." It is not as bodies of men, still less as political bodies of men, but as individuals, that men are made Christians. There is no such thing as wholesale conversions. It is seldom that a whole family is converted at once; and even when this takes place as in the case, of the family of the jailer of Philippi, they are converted as individuals; and when "a nation shall be born at once,"[3] as we hope and believe shall one day happen, even then the change will be a personal change in every individual. They who form the true Church of God were previously "not a people;" they were unconverted individuals; "one of a city, two of a family."[4] God does not take the inhabitants of the Roman empire and constitute them his church. He "takes out of the Gentiles a people for his name." His church is a body formed of individuals "redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, and people, and nation."[5]

[1] Hos. i. 10; ii. 23. [2] Hos. iii. 4, 5. [3] Acts xvi. 34. Isa. lxvi. 8.
[4] Jer. iii. 14. [5] Acts xv. 14. Rev. xiv. 4; vii. 9.

But though they were previously not a people, but a set of unconnected individuals, generally no way distinguished for their worldly respectability, for the most part belonging to the lower classes, "the foolish, the despised, the weak, the base things of this world;"[1] yet now they are not only a people, a regularly organized body, but the "people of God." The "people of God" is here, I apprehend, just another term for "the spiritual Israel," "the true circumcision." You are the people of God, is equivalent to, You are not only a society, but the most illustrious of all societies; having Jehovah for your king; standing to him in a peculiar relation, suited to the genius of the new, and spiritual, and heavenly economy, analogous to that in which Israel stood to him under the former external and temporary dispensation. You have the substance of all the typical and emblematical privileges which Israel, the people of God under that order of things, enjoyed. Of these the apostle gives a comprehensive catalogue: "To them pertaineth the adoption," or the sonship, "and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; theirs were the fathers, and of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came."[2]

Now, to Christians pertain a higher species of Divine Sonship than ever did, than ever could, belong to Israel according to the flesh—a nearer relation, a spiritual conformity; higher honors; a more valuable and enduring inheritance. Instead of the Shekinah, or visible glory, they have the manifestation of God in the person and work of his Son, contained in his word, and rendered influential by his Spirit, to guard them from danger, and guide them through the perplexities of the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan. Instead of the external covenants, they have that covenant which refers to "the sure mercies of" the mystical "David;" "the covenant well ordered and sure,"[3] which secures not the possession of Canaan for many ages, but the enjoyment of heaven forever. Instead of "the law which was given by Moses," and which, in the existing state of the world, was a "grace," a privilege, the value of which could not easily be estimated, they have what is a far more precious favor, "the grace and the truth which came by Jesus Christ."[4]

Instead of the imposing solemnities of legal worship, they have the simple and spiritual institutions of the gospel of Christ. Instead of the promises of the earthly Canaan and temporal prosperity, they have "the exceeding great and precious promises" of "spiritual and heavenly blessings," and which "are all yea and Amen, in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by them,"[5] and shall all be completely fulfilled in the Canaan above. They are "Abraham's seed, according to the promise;" "walking in the steps of his faith," and blessed with the highest blessing he enjoyed, justification by believing.[6] And they are connected with the Messiah by a relation far more intimate in its nature, far more important in its results, than that which distinguished the Israelites as his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" said the Messiah, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the

[1] 1 Cor. i. 26–29. [2] Rom. ix. 4. [3] Isa. lv. 3. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. [4] John i. 17.
[5] 2 Pet. i. 4. Eph. i. 3. 2 Cor. i. 20. [6] Gal. iii. 29. Rom. iv. 12. Gal. iii. 14.

same is my brother, and sister, and mother."[1] They are connected with him by a relation more intimate in its nature, and more blissful in its effects, than that which bound to him, as mother, the most blessed and honored of women. "Blessed," said a woman from the midst of a crowd, with which, on one occasion, he was surrounded, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts which thou hast sucked." "Yea, rather," said He in reply, "Yea, rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and do it."[2] Thus have true Christians, "who were not a people," become "the people of God," the spiritual Israel, the true circumcision.

(10.) *Christians "have obtained mercy."*

The only remaining designation of Christians, indicative of their having tasted that the Lord is gracious, that still requires illustration, is, that once they "had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." The language here, as in the case of the former designation, "who were not a people, but are now the people of God," is borrowed from a statement originally made with reference to the ten tribes, a promise of their restoration from their long captivity. "I will have mercy upon her who had not obtained mercy."[3] The ten tribes, even in the period of their abandonment by God, are the objects of his peculiar care. They are "beloved for the fathers' sake."[4] Yet still there is a sense, and an important one, in which, while in this state, they do "not obtain mercy." They are destitute of all clear manifestations of Divine peculiar regard towards them, and are, indeed, plainly marked as objects of the Divine judicial displeasure. But at the time of their restoration they shall find mercy. They shall obtain very palpable manifestations of the Divine peculiar favor. "I will make a covenant for them," says Jehovah, "with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle out of the earth," or the land, "and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth them to me forever; yea, I will betroth them to me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies: I will even betroth them to me in faithfulness; and they shall know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord: I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her to me in the earth; and I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy."[5]

The general truth, with respect to Christians, indicated by the language borrowed from the Divine dispensations to the ten tribes, is this: That from a state in which they were the objects of the Divine judicial displeasure and moral disapprobation, they are brought into a state in which they enjoy the most abundant evidence of his peculiar favor and complacential delight. In their original state, as fallen creatures, ignorant, in error, guilty, depraved, they "had not obtained mercy." God pitied them, and gave them many proofs of his for-

[1] Matt. xii. 48, 50. [2] Luke xi. 27, 28. [3] Hos. ii. 23.
[4] Rom. xi. 28. [5] Hos. ii. 18–23.

bearance, and patience, and providential munificence. Nay, more than this, God was determined to save them: they were the objects of his eternal, electing, sovereign love. But they were not, they could not be, the objects either of his judicial approbation or of his complacential delight. Oh, no! they were "condemned already;" they were "children of wrath, even as others." They were "wicked," and as wicked "God was angry with them every day;"—"enemies of God" by ignorance of mind, alienation of heart, and wicked works; objects of his holy displeasure and righteous condemnatory sentence; hopelessly, because wilfully, enslaved to Satan and to sin; mortal, with nothing to sweeten the bitterness of death, or lighten the darkness of the grave; immortal, yet destitute of all prospect of an eternity of blessedness. Such was their situation, in common with every individual of the fallen race to which they belong. Above them was an angry Divinity; around them were the instruments of his vengeance; and beneath them was the pit of perdition yawning wide to receive them. They "had not obtained mercy."

Such were they once; but what are they now? They "have obtained mercy." In consequence of believing in Christ, coming to him, they have received in rich abundance manifestations of the Divine saving grace, of God's distinguishing mercy. "In Christ they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of divine grace." God is "merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and their iniquities he remembers no more." They are "made accepted in the Beloved;" and "in him they obtain an everlasting inheritance." "Justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also they have access by faith into this grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," a hope that shall never make them ashamed. And "not only so, but they joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the reconciliation." "Created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, loves them, and blesses them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings." They are "made partakers of a divine nature," and "the Spirit of God and of glory rests on them, and dwells in them." "They are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." God "makes all things to work together for their good." "None can separate them from the love of God." "None can pluck them out of his hand." "Now are they the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what they shall be: but when he who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory; and they shall be like him, seeing him as he is." "Goodness and mercy follow them all their days." "All the ways of the Lord to them," even the most perplexing and mysterious, "are mercy and truth to them;" "they shall find mercy of him on that day;" and throughout eternity shall find how true is that declaration so often repeated in Scripture, "The mercy of the Lord endureth forever."[2] Thus have we com-

[1] John iii. 18. Eph. ii. 3. Psal. vii. 11. Col. i. 21. Eph. iv. 18.

[2] Eph. i. 3, 7, 8, 11. Heb. viii. 12. Rom. v. 1–11. Eph. ii. 10. 2 Pet. i. 4. 1 Pet. iv. 14. Rom. viii. 17, 28, 35–39. John x. 28, 29. 1 John iii. 1–3. Psal. xxiii. 6 · xxv. 10. 2 Tim. i. 18. Psal. cxxxvi. passim.

pleted our illustration of the third great branch of our subject; the numerous and varied dignities and blessings enjoyed by Christians, in consequence of their connection with Christ, viewed as manifestations of the Lord's graciousness to them.

And here let us pause and inquire, whether we have satisfactory evidence that we are personally interested in these exceeding great and precious privileges; that we, as the elect race, the holy nation, the peculiar people, have been effectually called out of darkness into God's marvellous light; that we, from being aliens and outcasts, have really been admitted among the people of God; that we, who were once objects of the Divine judicial displeasure and moral disapprobation, have now obtained mercy? The characteristic marks of a state of unregeneracy and of a state of regeneracy, are so palpable, that no man needs, no man can without the grossest inattention, remain ignorant of which of these is his own state.

Let those who have good ground to conclude that the great change has taken place in their case, that they have been turned from darkness to light, that they are a portion of that people which God has taken from among the Gentiles to himself, that they are the recipients of those saving blessings which are the manifestation of the love which God has to his own, cherish a grateful sense of the Divine, sovereign kindness. Let them never forget, that it is all grace and mercy, sovereign grace, unmerited mercy. Not to them, not to them, but to Him who loved them because he wills to love them, be all the glory. Let them walk like the children of the light and of the day. Let them make their light shine before men. Let them prove that they are the people of God, by being zealous of good works, by coming out from among the wicked world, and being separate, not touching the unclean thing. Let them show that they are indeed the recipients of divine mercy, by manifesting the effects which the reception of saving benefits uniformly has on the temper and conduct. Let the grace of God, enjoyed by them, teach them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this world, while they look for, haste to, the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

And O! let those who, if they think at all, must know that they are in the darkness of ignorance and sin, that they are not among the peculiar people, that they have not obtained mercy, consider what the end must be if they continue in their present condition. Pass that boundary which separates time from eternity, and you know that boundary must be passed soon by all of you, how soon, how suddenly, you do not, you cannot know; pass that boundary, and the darkness of a natural state will settle down into the blackness of darkness forever; they who are not God's people, never can become God's people; those who have not obtained mercy, never can obtain mercy. The change so absolutely necessary to your happiness, must take place in time, it cannot take place in eternity; it must take place on earth, it cannot take place in hell. Have you made up your mind

that it is never to take place? If you have not, why should it not take place now? Till this change take place, you cannot be secure or happy. Can you be safe or happy too soon? All who are dwelling amid the glorious light of God, were once, like you, in darkness. Those who are God's people were once not his people. Those who have obtained mercy, had not obtained mercy. The grace which saved them is able to save you; is willing, is ready, to save you. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" The light shines around you. Why shut your eyes to it? The door of admission to the fellowship of God's people stands open. Why will ye not enter in? The blessings of Divine mercy are held out to you. Why turn away from the proffered treasure, which gladly, gratefully received, would make you rich toward God, rich forever? Why madly strike back the hand which is stretched out to rescue you from destruction? Now, now, is the accepted time. Yet a little while, and the voice of invitation and warning will sink into silence; and instead of it be heard, the voice of generous regret, "Oh! that they had known!" They might, they would not, they shall not. No. No more forever!

IV.—THE MISERY AND RUIN OF THOSE WHO, BY REFUSING TO "COME TO CHRIST," REMAIN DESTITUTE OF THESE PRIVILEGES.

The only other branch of the subject which remains to be considered is, the misery and ruin of those who persist in unbelief and disobedience, rejecting Christ as the divinely laid foundation, viewed as an illustration by contrast of the graciousness of the Lord to those who believe in, come to, and build on Jesus Christ, as the foundation. This is stated in the following words, in the 7th and 8th verses: "To them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed."

The language is elliptical, and the manner in which the ellipsis is to be supplied, depends on the manner in which you translate and explain the clause which immediately precedes, rendered in our version, "he is precious." "To you who believe, he," that is, Jesus Christ, "is precious;" He is highly valued by you. Supposing this to be the true rendering, the ellipsis must be thus supplied, 'To them who are disobedient, he is contemptible; by them he is undervalued and despised;' and what follows should be the illustration of this. I have already stated to you the reason why I cannot consider these words, "To you who believe, he is precious,"—though embodying in them a truth very dear to the heart of every Christian, expressed in words very delightful to the ears of every Christian—as giving the meaning of the inspired writer. They are not the natural meaning of the original words. The statement they contain does not well accord either with what goes before, or with what follows them. It is plainly a conclusion or inference from the prophet's declaration, "He who believeth" on Christ, as the foundation, "shall not be ashamed." Now, that Christ is precious to believers, is no inference from this declaration; and the words that follow are plainly meant to be a con-

trast; but what contrast is there between these statements? Christ, as the foundation, is precious to believers; but unbelievers stumble over him so as to fall, and to be broken, and perish. The natural contrast is, Christ is precious to believers; he is little prized by unbelievers.

On the supposition, that the true rendering of the words is, "to you who believe there is honor," a rendering warranted, if not absolutely required, by the original terms, and giving exactly the inference warranted by the prophet's declaration, "he that believeth on him shall not be confounded;" "to you, then, that believe, there is, according to the prophet's declaration, not shame, but honor;"—on the supposition that this is the true rendering, the ellipsis must be thus supplied, 'To you, then, who believe there is honor, but to those who are disobedient, there is shame.' What follows is the illustration of this. The stone which they, like the builders, disallowed, is, in spite of their disallowance, made the head stone of the corner. This must cover them with shame and confusion. Nor is this all; they stumble over the stone which they refuse to build on, and are, in consequence, broken in pieces.

There is a reference here to two passages of Old Testament prediction: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner;" "and he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and snared, and taken."[1] The figure seems to be this: 'You, the unbelieving and disobedient, rejected the stone laid by God in Zion, and would not build on it; yet, in spite of your rejection, this stone is made the head stone, that is, the chief stone of the corner; and multitudes build on it, and grow up into a holy temple in the Lord.' The word "head stone," does not refer to its being the topmost, but the principal stone of the corner. Indeed, it seems plain, the stone referred to is a foundation stone, not a cope stone, and this explains what follows. Not only shall the stone you reject be made the chief stone of the corner; but as foundation corner-stones often projected from the building, it shall become to you "a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence," two expressions of exactly parallel meaning; a stone, a rock, over which you shall stumble so as to be greatly injured, indeed destroyed; stumble so, to use the prophet's words, as to "fall, and be broken."

The words, "whereunto also they were appointed," which have occasioned much controversy among critics and commentators, refer to the word "stumble," not to the word "disobedient."[2] The reference would have been more obvious had it been rendered, "who, being disobedient, stumble at the word," or rather, "who, being disobedient to the word, stumble." Stumbling is at once the consequence and the punishment of unbelief and disobedience. Sin is never represented as appointed by God; punishment is. God permits men to be sinners—that is, he does not hinder them from sinning; he appoints them, if they sin, to be punished. The reference here, however, does not seem to be to the Divine decree, so much as to the revelation of the Divine decree in the Divine prediction. The apostle refers to the passage quoted, and his words are equivalent to,—'to

[1] Psal. cxviii. 22. Isa. viii. 14, &c.

[2] See note B.

which stumbling, it appears, from the saying of the prophet, those who are disobedient are appointed.' God has connected this stumbling with unbelief as its natural effect, and in his word has said so.

The word rendered "disobedient,"[1] signifies unbelieving as well as disobedient, intimating to us the important truth, that faith and obedience, and unbelief and disobedience, are indissolubly connected; unbelief being disobedience to the great commandment, and the root of disobedience to all the commandments. The unbelieving and disobedient are represented as discrediting and disobeying the gospel revelation; but there seems to be a peculiar reference to "the word"[2] or discourse, the prophetic declaration which the inspired writer is immediately referring to.[3] The direct reference in the term disobedient is, no doubt, to the unbelieving Jews. When God proclaimed to them, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste,"—they disbelieved the declaration. They disobeyed the command. They rejected the stone. They would not build on it. They would not receive Jesus as the Messiah; on the contrary, they "took him, and with wicked hands they crucified and slew him."

But what was the consequence? Was the stone laid by Jehovah in Zion prevented from becoming the great foundation it was intended for, "the chief stone of the corner?" Oh, no; hear what Peter said on a memorable occasion, and what I have little doubt was in his mind when he wrote the passage now before us—"Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, God raised from the dead. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."[4] Disappointment and shame were their portion. In all their attempts to prevent the foundation being securely laid in its place, they had been furthering it; and when "they gathered together against the Lord and his Christ," they had done but "what his hand and counsel aforetime determined to be done."[5]

But this disappointment was not their only punishment. "The stone laid in Zion," which they rejected, on which they would not build, "was to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." Their opposition to the declared purpose of God brought on them severe inflictions of the Divine wrath. "Wrath to the uttermost," as the apostle speaks, "came on them." They "fell, and were broken." The awful prediction in the book of the prophet Isaiah, connected with the passage quoted, was fulfilled: "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. For the Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the Valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act."[6]

These awful predictions found their accomplishment in the siege and sack of Jerusalem, in the destruction of the temple, the dissolu-

[1] ἀπειθοῦσι. [2] τῷ λογῳ ἀπειθοῦντες. [3] Isa. xxviii. 16.
[4] Acts iv. 10, 11. [5] Acts iv. 27, 28. [6] Isa. xxviii. 17–21.

tion of the polity, the dispersion of the nation of the Jews. To these unbelieving, these disobedient ones, in consequence of their unbelief, their not coming to Christ, their not believing in him, there was not honor, but shame; they were confounded. Their emblem is not the temple, to whose stately buildings our Lord directed the attention of his disciples, but its scattered ruins, when one stone was not to be found upon another. Instead of "the chosen generation," they became "a rejected race." Instead of being "a royal priesthood," Jehovah proclaimed to them "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck. Bring no more vain oblations." Instead of being a holy nation, they left "their name as a curse to God's chosen; for the Lord God slew them, and called his people by another name."[1] Instead of being called out of darkness into God's glorious light, their light was turned into darkness; they were "cast into outer darkness."[2] They who were the people of God were no more the people of God, not even a people; they who had found mercy, no longer obtained mercy; "they were a people of no understanding! therefore he that made them would not have mercy on them, and he that formed them would show them no favor."[3] Their privileges were taken from them, and heavy judgments inflicted on them.

While I cannot doubt that the primary reference of these words is to the unbelieving Jews, both as individuals and as a nation in the primitive ages, it is plain that the statement here is substantially true of all who are unbelieving and disobedient, of every country and in every age. All who, being "disobedient to the word," "disallow the stone laid in Zion," must be disappointed. "He must reign."[4] It is easier to pull the sun from the firmament than to remove the Saviour from his throne; easier to arrest the course of that sun than to stop the progress of his gospel. Those who reject him show their wish that all should reject him, and that his religion should be extinguished; and sometimes they are mad enough to think, as the Jews no doubt did, when they had brought him to the cross and laid him in the grave, that they shall be successful. Voltaire proudly boasted, that one wise man would undo what twelve fools had done. Hume said, that Christianity could not survive the nineteenth century; and in the insane impieties of revolutionized France, many of their disciples fancied they saw the token of the accomplishment of these anticipations—

> "Fond impious man! think'st thou yon sanguine cloud
> Rais'd by thy breath has quench'd the orb of day?
> To-morrow He repairs the golden flood,
> And warms the nations with redoubled ray."[5]

Oh, how will confusion of face cover all unbelievers, when, on the great day, they find him whom they rejected, on the throne of universal judgment, and themselves trembling before his tribunal. Their miscalculations will make them the objects of "shame and contempt" to the whole intelligent creation of God to all eternity.

But this is not all. They shall stumble so as to fall—fall into hell.

[1] Isa. lxvi. 3; lxv. 15. [2] Matt. viii. 12. [3] Isa. xxvii. 11.
[4] 1 Cor. xv. 25. [5] Gray.

It is a serious matter to reject the Saviour. He is the only Saviour "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." He who will not be saved by him cannot be saved at all. He who rejects his sacrifice must bear the weight of unexpiated sin forever. "There remaineth for such, nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, to destroy them as the adversaries of God."[1]

To many "this is a hard saying," and they refuse to hear it. They cannot think that there is such a difference, in a moral point of view, between faith and unbelief, that their consequences should be more distant from each other than the poles of the earth, as distant as the heights of heaven are from the depths of hell. But steadily look at this unbelief, and you will cease to wonder. What is it, but to trample at once on all that is great, and all that is gracious, in the Divine character; to call the God of truth a liar, and the God of wisdom a fool; to despise his proffered gifts, and defy his threatened vengeance? If there be power in the arm of omnipotent justice, against whom can it be more worthily put forth than against the impenitent unbeliever? And, let it never be forgotten, the unbeliever is the destroyer of his own soul. He refuses to build on the foundation Jehovah has laid. This is folly and sin enough. But this is not all: he madly dashes himself against the chief foundation corner-stone, and breaks himself in pieces.

Oh, how different the state of the believer and the unbeliever; how happy the one, how miserable the other! Look at the two, and say if he who has secured the former has not reason to say, that the Lord has been gracious to *him*, for there was no alternative. If he had not obtained the honor and happiness of the believer, the shame and ruin of the unbeliever must have been his. And then let him further think, Who made him to differ? 'I was an unbeliever and a disobedient one, and left to myself, I should have been an unbeliever and disobedient one still. In that state I should have lived and died, and entered into eternity. What has made me to differ? Sovereign kindness. Whence came my faith, and all its blessed consequences, in time and in eternity? It is not of myself, "it is the gift of God." It was given me "on behalf of Christ to believe on his name." Surely, surely the Lord has been gracious to *me*.'

I have thus brought before your minds the four great sources of illustrative proof, that the Lord is gracious to Christians. Their natural condition, the manner in which that condition was changed, the blessings of their new condition, and the final state of those who obstinately continue in their natural condition; all these, rightly considered, are fitted to deepen this conviction on a Christian's mind,—'Verily the Lord is gracious, and I have tasted of his grace.'

It is of importance to inquire, What is the practical end which the apostle seeks to gain by pressing on the attention of Christians these proofs that the Lord is gracious? That end is easily discovered. This was his wish, as it was his Master's will, even their sanctifica-

[1] Acts iv. 12. Heb. x. 26, 27.

tion; and he was fully persuaded that men will never be holy, but in the degree in which they believe that God is good, good to them. "When the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that we, being justified by his grace, might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who believe in God may be careful to maintain good works."[1]

The apostle Peter does not leave us to find out his object by such a reference as we have now made to general principles. He distinctly shows us why he appeals to the graciousness of the Lord: "Love one another with a pure heart fervently. Lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings," "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," "*Seeing* ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." He plainly acts on the same principle as his beloved brother Paul, when he says, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God," manifested in the divine method of justification, "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, by Christ Jesus, which is your rational ministry as spiritual priests; and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God."[2]

I cannot conclude these illustrations without dropping a word of warning to those to whom this word of salvation has come, but as yet come in vain; to whom God has long been proclaiming, "Behold, I have laid in Zion as a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation," but who, instead of believing on it, coming to it, building on it, have been, like the Jewish builders, rejecting it, disallowing it. Your situation, "men and brethren," is awfully perilous. If you will not build on that stone, you must stumble over it, and fall, and be broken. As to present privileges, you are in far better circumstances than the heathen, who never heard of the way of salvation; but as to future destiny, if you do not enter on the way of salvation opened before you, you shall be in far worse circumstances than they. Yes, in the day of judgment, "it shall be more tolerable for the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you." All the happiness of the highest heavens is freely offered you, if you will accept of it in the only way God can give it, or you receive it; but if you contemptuously put it away from you, you not only must lose it, but you must sink yourselves into the very lowest depths of hopeless misery.

If you perish—and you cannot perish but by your own obstinate refusal of a salvation, ready to be bestowed on you if you will but accept of it—your perdition will be no ordinary perdition. The awful declarations of the Apocalypse will be realized in your experience: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he

[1] Tit. iii. 4–8. [2] Rom. xii. 1, 3.

shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascended up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night."[1]

But, oh, why should it be so? God has no "pleasure in your death;" he swears by his life that he has not. He wills you to turn from your evil ways, and live. If you perish, you must be self-destroyers. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Be no longer disobedient to the word of mercy. Receive it gladly, gratefully; and in receiving it you will receive the Saviour and his salvation. The feast of gospel grace is set before you, and urged on your acceptance: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." May the good Spirit render effectual the invitation of the word, and induce you all to take of the bread and the water of life freely, that, eating and drinking, you may live forever.

NOTE A. p. 174.

"Saxo quod adhuc vivum radice tenetur."—OVID. Met. xiv. 714. —— "vivoque sedilia saxo."—VIRG. Æn. i. 171. ALEX. MORUS' note is curious:—"Apud Ethnicos quoque lapidum vivorum reperies mentionem, λιθοὺς ἐμψύχους. Plutarchus *de fluminibus* non semel vocat lapides vivos, inter quos θρασύδειλον Eurotæ proprium lapidem nominat, qui, tuba sonante, prosiliebat, ad ripam scilicet; Atheniensium autem audito nomine, mergebatur in profundum. Nec minus fabulosa quæ Suidas habet de Heraisco Ægyptio Philosopho qui rite dignoscere calleret ἀγάλματα τὰ ζῶντα, καὶ μὴ ζῶντα vel ἄψυχα καὶ ἄμοιρα θείας ἐπιπνοίας. Contra Petrus fideles vere lapides vivos vere spilantes ac loquentes, Dei statuas spirituales et participes θείας ἐπιπνοίας hic dixit." *Notæ ad quædam loca N. F.* p. 210.

NOTE B. p. 224.

"Προσκόπτουσι. Ἀπειθοῦντες. Horum autem verborum prius designat proprie *pœnam*, posterius *culpam;* pronomen autem *ad quod* refertur ad prius, non ad posterius. Improbos destinavit Deus ad pœnam, non ad culpam." CAPPELLUS.—"Προσκόπτουσι—Ἀπειθοῦντες:" the former of these words designates punishment; the latter, sin. The pronoun δ—εις δ refers to the former, not to the latter. God appoints the wicked to punishment, not to sin. Some anti-Calvinists have found in these words a proof, that even they who perish through unbelief were appointed to salvation. They refer δ, in the teeth of grammar, to λόγος; and try to bring out, or rather put in, the sense, to use the words of one of them, a very worthy Lutheran, HEMMINGIUS: "Etsi illis destinata erat salutis promissio, tamen non crediderunt." It is sad when the love of system leads good men thus to "pervert" the word of God. "Mens Petri est: Hoc infidelium præsertim Judæorum scandalum et πρόσκομμα, ad Christum lapidem angularem dudum a prophetis, Christo, aliisque assertum et prædictum esse."—Jer. viii. 14, 15. Matt. xxi. 42, 44. Luke ii. 34. Rom. ix. 32, 33.—KYPKE, ii. 430.

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[1] Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

DISCOURSE IX.

A SECOND FIGURATIVE VIEW OF THE STATE AND CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS, WITH APPROPRIATE EXHORTATIONS.

1 Pet. ii. 11, 12.—Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

These two verses, which form one sentence, bring before our minds a very important department of christian duty; to the illustration and enforcement of which it is our intention to devote this discourse. The subject naturally divides itself into two parts; an injunction of duty, and a statement of the motives which urge compliance with that injunction. The duty enjoined is twofold: abstinence from fleshly lusts, and having the conversation honest among the Gentiles. The motives are these: "Ye are strangers and pilgrims." "These lusts war against the soul;" and abstinence from them, and the maintenance of an "honest conversation among the Gentiles," have a tendency to overcome their prejudices against both you and your religion, and to lead them to "glorify God in the day of visitation." To unfold, then, the meaning of these injunctions, and to point out the force of these motives, are the two objects which I have in view in the following remarks.

I.—THE DUTIES ENJOINED.

§ 1.—*Abstinence from "fleshly lusts."*

The first duty enjoined in the text is, "Abstinence from fleshly lusts." "Lusts," in the New Testament use of that word, signifies desires; strong desires; usually inordinate, unduly strong desires. The phrase "fleshly lusts" is often considered as meaning, desires for sensual enjoyment; desires which obtain their gratification by means of bodily organs. This is, however, very unduly to limit the signification of the term. Among the "works of the flesh," which are just the lusts of the flesh embodied, we find enumerated, "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies," as well as "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness."[1]

Flesh is the principal constituent of the human body, and the body is the visible part of the compound being, man. Hence flesh comes to be used for human nature, or mankind.[2] All mankind, since the

[1] Gal. v. 19–21. [2] Gen. vi. 13. Psal. lvi. 4. Matt. xxiv. 22. Rom. iii. 20. John i. 14.

fall, are depraved beings; and hence flesh is often, especially in the epistolary part of the New Testament, used to signify fallen human nature, or mankind as depraved.[1] Agreeably to this use of the term flesh, fleshly desires are those desires which characterize mankind as depraved, which belong to, and are distinctive of, fallen human nature, what are elsewhere termed "worldly lusts."[2]

The desires, including under that name the appetites and the passions, as well as those principles of which the word 'desires' is the appropriate technical name, form a very important part of our active nature, and are fitted to serve numerous useful and benevolent purposes. The desire of meat and of drink; the desire of knowledge; the desire of esteem; the desire of power; the desire of property, and other desires of a similar kind, belong essentially to human nature; and are as much the gifts of God as reason or conscience; and, like these higher faculties, are plainly intended and calculated to minister to man's improvement and happiness.

Some of these desires, as belonging to man as an embodied being, may be termed fleshly, as they cannot exist in purely spiritual beings; but these are not the desires here referred to. God never requires impossibilities; and to abstain from the desires we have mentioned is an impossibility. Those desires are neither virtuous nor vicious. They are parts of our constitution, which ought to be regulated and restrained when they come in competition with more important principles, which, in a perfect state of human nature, they never would. To eradicate them, if the thing were possible, which I believe it is not, would not be to improve, but to mutilate human nature. The amputation of arms and legs would not at all add to the beauty and usefulness of the human body; and just such an improvement on the mind, would be the depriving it of any of those active powers with which its infinitely wise and benignant Author has endowed it. That were to make us "new creatures," in a sense very different indeed from that in which the apostle uses the term.

In no part of our natue has the malignant influence of the fall been more apparent, than in our moral or active faculties; and in none of these active powers do we discern clearer marks of degeneration than in our desires. Our desires, in very many instances, seek their gratification in objects, the pursuit of which is proscribed by God, as his will is indicated by reason, by conscience, or by an express revelation; and where the object of desire is not in itself improper, the desire itself is often foolish, in consequence of its being disproportioned to the real or comparative value of the object: and criminal, because unsubordinated to the will of God.

These are the desires which are here termed "fleshly lusts;" such desires as Adam was a stranger to while he continued innocent; such desires as are now characteristic of the whole of his degenerate offspring. These desires, unlike the original principles referred to above, are not to be regulated, but destroyed. They are right hands that are to be cut off; right eyes that are to be plucked out. As members of the old man, they are to be mortified; as affections and lusts of the flesh, they are to be crucified.

[1] Rom. vii. 18; viii. 5. Gal. v. 13.

[2] Tit. ii. 12.

To "abstain from fleshly lusts," then, is to refrain from desiring that which is forbidden. It is, in other words, to yield obedience to the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet;" thou shalt not desire that which God says thou shouldst not seek to obtain. Every desire of what is forbidden, what is criminal in itself, or criminal to us in our circumstances, is a "fleshly desire," a desire which marks the being who indulges it as morally depraved, and is not to be indulged, even in the slightest degree, is not to be tampered with, but destroyed, strangled in its birth, repressed on its first rising.

But this is not all: To "abstain from fleshly lusts," is to refrain from all inordinate or excessive desire, even of what is in itself lawful. It is in this form of the evil that Christians chiefly need to be warned against fleshly or worldly lusts. It is a sad mistake to suppose that our desires are lawful, because the objects of our desire are not forbidden. It may be that they are so far from being forbidden, that we would sin if we did not desire them, and yet in desiring them inordinately we may sin. Our desires may be "fleshly desires," that is, desires rising out of the depravity of our nature, and at once exercising and increasing that depravity.

To desire anything seen and temporal, be it pleasure, knowledge, power, fame, money, or anything else, as absolutely necessary to, and sufficient for, our happiness, is a fleshly desire. That is, in other words, to make that thing our God, and is in direct opposition to the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other God before me:" to the breathing of the Spirit, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on all the earth whom I desire besides thee." [1] He who cherishes any desire unsubordinated to the will of God, cherishes a fleshly desire; and from this species of fleshly desire, as well as the former, Christians are commanded to "abstain." They are to "flee from idolatry;" to "keep themselves from idols;" and "covetousness," that is, the inordinate desire of any created good, "is idolatry." [2]

These, then, are the two branches of the great law, "Abstain from fleshly lusts." Refrain from desiring whatever is forbidden. Refrain from inordinately desiring anything seen and temporal, however innocent in itself.

This, like every one of God's laws, is "holy, just, and good." It leaves abundant room for the healthy operation of natural desires. It allows us to desire everything that is really desirable, in the degree in which it is desirable. It only forbids us to indulge a desire which, whether gratified or not, must end in disappointment and ruin. The language of this law is, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" [3] Surely it is impossible not to recognize the Divine wisdom and kindness in this spiritual commandment. It puts the check in the right place. It seeks to prevent the works of the flesh, by prohibiting the lusts of the flesh. Human laws seek to dam up or divert the stream; the Divine law seeks to dry up the fountain.

From these few plain remarks, every person who wishes to understand the subject, may easily perceive what it is to abstain from fleshly lusts—a much more extensive and difficult duty than many are

[1] Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26.
[2] 1 Cor. x. 14. 1 John v. 21. Col. iii. 5.
[3] Prov. xxiii. 5.

aware of: but it may serve a good purpose, before closing this part of the discussion, to say a word or two on the way in which we are to yield obedience to this most reasonable command, "Abstain from fleshly lusts."

The first remark to be made here is, that, in order to abstain from fleshly lusts, we must carefully guard against temptation. We are in continual danger; there are always objects at hand fitted to provoke sinful desire in some of its forms; and a busy, crafty adversary, is ever ready to take advantage of any opportunity that offers against us. We must therefore avoid placing ourselves in circumstances in which such desires are likely to be excited; and when, by the providence of God, we are placed in such circumstances, we are to "keep our hearts with all diligence;" and, sensible that all our keeping will not serve the purpose, we must give our hearts to God to keep them. We must "watch and be sober;" "be sober and watch;" "watch and pray;" and this should be our prayer: "Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness," the general name of fleshly, worldly desires. "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." [1]

We must recollect that nothing can overcome the world, and the things that are in the world—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," and "the god of this world," who by these subjugates us, and makes us his slaves—but the word of God dwelling in us. It is "our faith" of that word; or, to employ an equivalent expression, that word believed, that "overcometh the world." It brings us under "the powers of the world to come," and thus "delivers us from this present evil world." Were the realities of eternity habitually before the mind, fleshly lusts could no more take root and flourish there, than "perishable materials be reared into structures amid the fires of the last day." [2]

The grand preservation against "fleshly lusts" is to have the mind pre-occupied with spiritual and heavenly affections; and to have the heart so full of holy happiness in the enjoyment of God, as that there is neither room nor relish in it for low-born, earthly, sensual, sinful enjoyments. The strong man can be put out of the house, and kept out of it, only by the stronger than he getting possession, and keeping possession of it. The true way of emptying a vessel of atmospheric air, and keeping that from re-occupying its place, is to fill it with some heavier fluid.

It is finely said by the good Archbishop I have so often quoted to you: "The happiness and pleasantness of the Christian's estate sets him above the need of the pleasures of sin. The apostle has said before: 'Since ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire the sincere milk of the word;' desire that word, wherein ye may taste more of his graciousness; and as that fitly urgeth the appetites' desire of the word, so it is strong to persuade this abstinence from fleshly lusts; yea, the disdain and loathing of them. If you have the least experience of the sweetness of his love, if you have but tasted of the crystal river of his pleasures, the muddy polluted pleasures of sin will be hateful and loathsome to you; yea, the best earthly delights that

[1] Prov. iv. 23. 1 Tim. v. 6. 1 Pet. iv. 7; v. 8. Psal. cxix. 36, 37.
[2] Robert Hall.

are, will be disrelished and unsavory to your tastes. The embittering of the breasts of the world to the ungodly, by afflictions, doth something, indeed, to their weaning from them; but the breasts of consolation that are given them in their stead, wean them much more effectually.

"The true reason why we remain servants to these lusts, some to one, some to another, is because we are still strangers to the love of God, and those pure pleasures which are in him. Though the pleasures of this world be poor and low, and most unworthy of our pursuit, yet so long as men know no better, they will stick by those they have, such as they are. It is too often in vain to speak to men on this, to follow them with the apostle's entreaty, 'I beseech you, abstain from fleshly lusts,' unless they that are spoken to, be such as he speaks of in the former words, such as have obtained mercy, and have tasted of the graciousness and love of him whose loves are better than wine. O that we would but seek the knowledge of this love; for, seeking it, we would find it; and, finding it, no force would be needful to pull the delights of sin out of our hands; we would throw them away of our own accord." This is the true secret of yielding obedience to the commandment in the text, abstain from fleshly lusts. O that we all were experimentally acquainted with it! How happy, how holy, should we be!

§ 2.—"*Having a conversation honest among the Gentiles.*"

The second duty enjoined in the text is: "Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles." "Conversation" here, and in many other places in the New Testament, does not mean colloquial intercourse, but conduct, general behavior; as, "Only let your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ;" "Be holy in all manner of conversation."[1]

The term "honest"[2] here, as in some other parts of the New Testament, is used in a somewhat obsolete sense; as equivalent to honorable, respectable, morally beautiful and lovely; what commands esteem and reverence. "Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles," means, Let your conduct be such as will meet the approbation of God and good men, and such as even the heathen shall be obliged to venerate. It is materially the same exhortation as that given by the Apostle Paul to the Philippians: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest," venerable, "whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things,"[3] do these things.

The heathens were poor judges of christian doctrine; there was much, too, in the christian character, the excellence of which they could not at all appreciate. But when they saw Christians making it plain that no temptation could induce them to deviate from the straight path prescribed by the laws of temperance, and chastity, and justice, and love; rendering to no man evil for evil; meekly suffering many injuries, but inflicting none; denying themselves the comforts

[1] Phil. i. 27. 1 Pet. i. 15. [2] Καλήν. [3] Phil. iv. 8.

of life, to supply those who were destitute of its necessaries; sacrificing and suffering everything, rather than violate conscience: they could not help feeling how beautiful and how awful goodness is; and a testimony was silently lodged in their hearts, in behalf of the religion of Christ, which no reasoning could have placed there. "There is a majesty in strict, serious, consistent goodness, that commands esteem and reverence from the worst of men."

The positive command includes the negative: Beware of everything in your conduct which might shock the moral feelings of a heathen; beware of anything which might lead him in any way to form an opinion dishonorable to "the worthy name by which ye are called," or open his mouth in blasphemy against Him to whom it belongs. It is a most important duty incumbent on Christians, in all countries and ages, living among the men of the world, remembering that, among other proofs of their Lord's graciousness to them, he has made them the guardians of his honor among men, to act a part which shall command the respect and esteem of those around them, and to be careful that they let not "their good be evil spoken of."[1]

It deserves notice, that the two duties enjoined are represented as very closely connected. It is by abstaining from fleshly lusts that their conversation was to be honest among the Gentiles. If they did not abstain from fleshly lusts, their conversation would be dishonorable, both to themselves and to their religion. If they did abstain from fleshly lusts, an honest, honorable behavior would be a matter of course. The heart must be kept with all diligence, if we would wish the issues of life which flow from it to be satisfactory. Let the heart be regulated; the tongue, the eyes, the hands, the feet, will all be properly employed. Let the thoughts and the desires be as they ought to be, and the actions will be unblameable. If the corrupt spring is not cleansed, the stream cannot be pure: if it is, the stream cannot but be pure.

It is a sad mistake to think, that the conduct will ever be what God would have it to be, till the heart is changed; that the conversation will ever be really comely, while men do not abstain from fleshly lusts. The heart must be "purified by the Spirit through the word," in order to man's being "holy in all manner of life and conversation." And it is not less true, and not less important, that the want of a comely conversation, of a holy behavior, is a proof, whatever profession men make, that fleshly lusts still hold dominion within. As the fruit cannot be good if the tree is not good, so neither can the tree be good if the fruit is not good. The goodness of the tree is the necessary cause of the goodness of the fruit, and the goodness of the fruit is the only satisfactory evidence of the goodness of the tree.

So much for the illustration of this branch of our subject: The injunction of duty, "Abstain from fleshly lusts, having your conversation honest among the Gentiles." Refrain from desiring what is forbidden; refrain from inordinately desiring anything that is seen and temporal; and thus maintain a habitual behavior so morally

[1] 1 Rom. xiv. 16.

lovely and venerable, that even your heathen neighbors shall be constrained to take notice of you, and trace the obvious effect to the hidden cause, the goodness of your conduct to the goodness of your principles.

II.—MOTIVES TO THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES.

Let us now turn our attention to the second branch of the subject: A statement of the motives which urge to compliance with this injunction of duty. The motives are drawn from the character and circumstances of Christians, and from the tendency and consequences, both of the course from which they are dissuaded, and of that to which they are urged. The motive deduced from the character and conduct of Christians, is contained in these words: You are "pilgrims and strangers." The motive drawn from the tendency and consequences of the course dissuaded from is: These fleshly lusts "war against the soul;" and that drawn from the tendency and consequences of the course recommended is: That the Gentiles, who spoke against them as evil-doers, might, by their good works which they beheld, glorify God in the day of visitation." Let us attend to these motives in their order, and endeavor to show their appropriateness and their power.

§ 1.—*Motive drawn from the condition and character of Christians as "pilgrims and strangers."*

The first motive is drawn from the condition and character of Christians as "pilgrims and strangers." In the literal meaning of the words, those to whom they were originally addressed were pilgrims and strangers. They were chiefly Jews and proselytes, living among the heathen inhabitants of the regions of Asia Minor. Viewed even in this way, there is force in the statement, considered as a motive to the duty enjoined. 'The great body of those among whom you live are serving fleshly lusts; you are constantly exposed to the powerful influence of all but universally prevalent custom. Beware lest "evil communications corrupt good manners." '

There can, however, be no reasonable doubt, that the words pilgrim and stranger are here used figuratively, and in a sense equally applicable to all Christians, in all countries and ages, as to those to whom they were originally addressed.[1] In a figurative sense, all men may be said to be pilgrims and sojourners on earth. They are to continue here but for a short season; they are, as it were, on a journey to their long home; and a consideration of this, places in a strong point of view the folly of men, in allowing their minds to be chiefly occupied with objects and pursuits belonging exclusively to

[1] The respective force of the two words παροίκους and παρεπιδήμους is well given by Bengel:—"Gradatio, non tantum ut in aliena domo—sed etiam ut in aliena civitate." Not only away from their own house, but from their own country,—in the fullest sense from home. Neither of the words expresses what is peculiar in the signification of the English word "pilgrim."

a scene from which they must soon, and may suddenly, depart forever; and which are in no degree fitted to prepare them for that permanent state into which, on leaving the present, they are to enter.

But the Christian is, in a sense peculiar to himself, a pilgrim and stranger. He is a child of God, living among the children of the wicked one. He is a citizen of heaven, sojourning for a season on the earth. Heaven is his home. There is his treasure, and there is his heart also. His great object here is to promote the interests of the kingdom that is not of this world; to pass through this land of strangers and enemies with as little injury as possible; to get safe to the better land, and take as many as he can along with him.

For such a person to indulge in fleshly lusts is in the highest degree incongruous. "There is," as Leighton remarks, "a diligence in his calling, and prudent regard of his affairs, not only permitted to a Christian, but required of him; but yet in comparison of his great and 'high calling,' as the apostle terms it, he follows all his other businesses with a kind of coldness and indifferency, as not accounting very much how they go: his heart is elsewhere. The traveller provides himself as he can of entertainment and lodging, where he comes. If it be commodious, it is well; but if not, it is no great matter. If he can find but necessaries, he can abate delicacies very well; for where he finds them in his way he neither can, nor, if he could, would he choose to stay there. Though his inn were dressed with the richest hangings and furniture, yet it is not his home; he must, and he would, leave it. It is not for those born from above to *mind* earthly things. If Christians would but consider how little, and for how little a time, they are concerned in anything here, they would go through any estate, and any changes of estate, either to the better or the worse, with very composed, equal minds, always moderate in their necessary cares, and never taking any care at all for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it. Let them that have no better home than this world to lay claim to, live here as at home, and serve their lusts. Let them who have all their portion in this life, who have no more good to look for than what they can catch here, let them take their time of the poor profits and pleasures that are here. But you that have your whole estate, all your riches and pleasures, laid up in heaven, and reserved there for you, let your lusts, your intense desires, not be fleshly, but spiritual; not earthly, but heavenly; let the spirit out-lust the flesh; let your hearts be there, and your conversation there. This is not the place of your rest, nor of your delights: unless you be willing to change, and to have your good things here, as some foolish travellers, that spend the estate they should live on at home in a little while, leaving it abroad among strangers. Will you, with profane Esau, sell your birthright for a mess of pottage; sell eternity, for a moment; and such pleasures, as a moment of them is more worth than an eternity of the other?"

§ 2.—*Motive drawn from the tendency of the course proscribed—"It wars against the soul."*

The second motive is drawn from the tendency and consequences of the course dissuaded from. Those fleshly lusts, from which Christians are required to abstain, are said "to war against the soul."[1] They are injurious to our highest interests, the interests of the soul; they are inconsistent with the peace of the soul; they are hostile to the improvement of the soul; they are, if indulged in, fatal to the final happiness of the soul.

They are inconsistent with the peace of the soul. The christian poet speaks the words of truth and soberness, when he says,—

> "God is the source and centre of all minds—
> Their only point of rest——
> From Him departing they are lost, and rove
> At random, without honor, hope, or peace."[2]

God is a suitable and a sufficient portion for man; and he, and he only, who takes up with Him as a portion, has, or can have, solid rest. He is kept in perfect peace while he trusts in God. Even a single fleshly lust destroys rest; for it takes the soul away from God, the only true rest. But this is not all; "fleshly lusts," though all opposed to that desire after happiness in God which should be the master active principle in our minds, are by no means harmonious among themselves. They "war" with each other "in our members,"[3] and tear their unhappy victim in pieces. The lover of sinful pleasure, of power, of fame and gain, knows well that the way in which those lusts drag or drive him along, is anything but the way of peace.

They are hostile to the improvement of the soul. The improvement of the soul consists in growth in the knowledge of God, and in true holiness; in increasing conformity to His image. Fleshly lusts are plainly inconsistent with this. They destroy that calm, collected state of mind, which is necessary to progress in knowledge and holiness; they occupy the time which ought to be devoted to the pursuits which conduce to spiritual improvement; and they utterly indispose to, they morally incapacitate the mind for, such pursuits. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."[4] "They do not," as has been justly said, "only divert from spiritual things for the time, but they habitually indispose it to every spiritual work, and make it earthly and sensual, and so unfit for heavenly things. Where these lusts, or any one of them, have dominion, the soul cannot at all perform any spiritual duty; can neither pray, nor hear, nor read the word aright; and, in as far as any of them prevail upon the soul of a child of God, they do disjoint and disable it from holy things."[5]

Finally, if indulged, those fleshly lusts will be fatal to the ultimate happiness of the soul. This is equally plain from the nature of things, and the express declarations of the word of God. A man under the

[1] Στρατεύονται. Non modo impediunt sed oppugnant.—BENGEL. They not only hinder, they oppose.
[2] Cowper. [3] James iv. 1. [4] Rom. viii. 7. [5] Leighton.

influence of fleshly lusts, even if taken to heaven, could not be happy, must be miserable. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. The declarations of the word of God on the subject are most explicit: The end of a life in the flesh is death, eternal death. "We are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." [1]

§ 3.—*Motive drawn from the tendency of the course recommended.*

The third motive is drawn from the tendency and probable consequences of the course recommended. The tendency and probable result of their "having their conversation honest among the Gentiles," in consequence of their abstaining from fleshly lusts, is stated to be this: "The Gentiles, who spoke against them as evil-doers, by their good works which they beheld, would be led to glorify God in the day of visitation." The Gentiles, amidst whom the Christians addressed by Peter lived, spoke against them as evil-doers. The primitive Christians were very generally represented as monsters of wickedness, as guilty of the most unnatural and atrocious crimes, as atheists and haters of mankind.[2] Even in that circumstance a reason might be found for Christians being peculiarly careful to indulge no disposition and to follow no course of conduct, which could give even the slightest probability to these calumnious misrepresentations. It was of great importance that, when spoken evil of, it should be falsely, —obviously, demonstratively, falsely.

But this is not the motive here employed by the apostle. He counts on the natural effect of uniform good behavior on the minds of the observers; and looking forward to a period, which he calls "the day of visitation," he encourages Christians by the hope that their "honest conversation" might be the means of bringing their heathen neighbors to a better mind, "to repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth;" and of leading them, instead of calumniating and cursing *them*, to glorify *God*.

"The day of visitation" is plainly the day of God's visitation. God is said to visit men when he gives very decided proofs of his presence and power, either in works of judgment or of mercy. The phrase is used in the first sense in the following passage in the prophecy of Isaiah: "What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation that shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" [3] It is used in the second sense, when God is said to have "visited Israel" in Egypt, and to have "visited and redeemed his people," when he "raised up for them a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David;" and when God

[1] Rom. vi. 21; viii. 12, 13. Gal. vi. 7, 8.

[2] They were represented as cannibals, magicians, infanticides; and as indulging in the most shocking impurities at their nocturnal assemblies.—Just. Apolog. i. Œcumen. in loc. Euseb. iv. 7; v. 1. August. de Civ. Dei, xviii. 53.

[3] Isa. x. 3.

is said to have "visited the Gentiles to take from among them a people to his name;" and probably when Jerusalem is said not to have known "the time of her visitation," the day in which she might have known "the things which belonged to her peace." [1]

If the phrase be understood in the first sense, the meaning is, that the good behavior of the Christians would, when Divine judgments came either on the Jewish or the Pagan opposers of Christianity, induce even those who had formerly spoken evil of them, to admit the righteousness of the Divine judgments, and glorify God by acknowledging how unfounded had been the reproaches they had cast on his people.

If the phrase be understood in the second sense, then the meaning is, in the day when God visits these poor benighted Gentiles with his grace, your consistent, holy conduct, witnessed by them, will be one of the means employed by him in leading them to glorify him in embracing the gospel and devoting themselves to his service.

This latter view of the words seems, on the whole, best to harmonize with the scope and design of the whole passage. The consistent, holy conduct of Christians, has often been the means of promoting the conversion of unbelievers; and few considerations are more likely to weigh with a true Christian, as to the adoption or rejection of a particular course of conduct, than this. 'By such a course I may harden men in unbelief, embolden them in sin, smooth their path to perdition, and obstruct their way to the Saviour; by such another course I may rouse them to consideration, I may lead them to inquiry, I may soften prejudice, I may "convert the sinner from the error of his ways, save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."' [2]

The great ultimate object which every Christian should, which every genuine Christian does, contemplate, is the promotion of the glory of God. In his estimation, every desirable end is included in God's being glorified. This should be,—this is, when he acts in character, his predominant design and thought, "that in all things God may be glorified." "In what way shall I most advance the glory of my God? How shall I, who am engaged more than them all, set in with the heavens and the earth, and the other creatures, to declare his excellence, his greatness, and his goodness?" [3]

What formidable obstacles have the earthly-mindedness, and the unlovely temper and behavior of professed Christians, thrown in the way of the glory of God being displayed in the progress and triumph of the religion of Christ among mankind! How have their "envyings, and strifes, and divisions"—all, as Paul says, the manifestation of carnality or fleshliness—how have these impeded, and all but "destroyed, the work of God!" Never can we reasonably hope for a better state of things till those who bear the name of Christ, abstaining from fleshly lusts, have their conversation more honest, more lovely, more venerable, among the Gentiles. When Zion, enlightened by the heavenly beams of sanctifying truth, arises and shines, then, not till then, shall "the Gentiles come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising." [4]

[1] Exod. xiii. 19. Acts xv. 14. Luke i. 68; xix. 44.
[2] James v. 20.
[3] Leighton.
[4] Isa. lx. 1, 2.

Such, then, are the motives by which the apostle enforces his injunction on Christians to abstain from fleshly lusts, and to have their conversation honest among the Gentiles.

Brethren, this is our duty, as well as that of those to whom these words were originally addressed; and the motives presented are such as should influence us as well as them. Abstinence from all that is forbidden or even doubtful, and the having a consistent, uniform, ornamental christian behavior, are duties incumbent on Christians in all countries, and in all ages—duties so important and essential, that, if they be neglected, we can have no just claim to "the worthy name" which we bear. And are not we "pilgrims and sojourners before God, as were are all our fathers?" Are we not by our profession "plainly declaring, that we are seeking a country, a better country, that is an heavenly?" Do we not feel that the indulgence of inordinate desire for any earthly good disturbs our peace, and impedes our progress, and endangers our salvation? Ought we not to be desirous to be instrumental in advancing the glory of God by promoting the conversion of men? Then let us, as pilgrims on earth, and citizens of heaven, "set our affections on things above, and not on the things which are on the earth; let us seek the things that are above at the right hand of God; let us mortify our members that are on the earth;" let us "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;" let us repress all the desires "which war against the soul;" let us not degrade the souls which God breathed into us, which Christ died to save, which the Holy Spirit is willing to make his dwelling-place, into slaves to those vile subordinate agents of the prince of darkness, which seek their destruction. Let us cherish all those desires and affections which give peace, and health, and vigor, and activity, to the hidden man of the heart; let us war against those fleshly lusts which war against our souls; let us "not be conformed to this world," so full of, so domineered over by, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" but let us be "transformed by the renewing of our minds," and "prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God."

In fine, pitying a world lying in wickedness and hurrying to hell, let us do all we can to save them. If we can do little in any other way, let us at least, by a holy, consistent conduct, by exemplifying the purity and the peace of the religion of Christ, proclaim to all around us, "We are journeying towards the land of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you: come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." "Let your light, then, so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your father who is in heaven." [1]

[1] Col. iii. 1–5. Num. x. 29. Matt. v. 16.

DISCOURSE X.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN REFERENCE TO IT.

1 Pet. ii. 13–15.—Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do dwell. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

It has been remarked, that the moral precepts of Christianity are highly valuable, not only when viewed in reference to their primary and direct object, the direction and guidance of the movements of the inner and outer man, the regulation of the temper and conduct, the dispositions and actions, but also when considered in their subsidiary and indirect references, particularly in their bearing on the evidence of the Divine origin of that system of revelation of which they form so important a part. That bearing is manifold. Let us look at it in its various phases. Were a book, consisting partly of doctrinal statements and partly of moral precepts, claiming a Divine origin, put into our hands; and were we to find on perusal the moral part of it fantastic and trifling, inconsistent with the principles of man's constitution, unsuitable to the circumstances in which he is placed, and incompatible with the great laws of justice and benevolence, we should enter on the examination of the evidence appealed to, in support of its high pretensions, under the influence of a strong and justifiable suspicion. The study, for example, of the morality of the Talmud, or of the Koran, would go far, before commencing an investigation of evidence, to satisfy an enlightened inquirer that its claims to a Divine authority could not be satisfactorily supported.

On the other hand, when, in the New Testament, we find a moral code requiring all that is, and nothing that is not, "true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely," we cannot but be impressed with the conviction, that the system of which this forms a constituent part is worthy of being carefully inquired into; and we enter on the inquiry not merely with excited attention, but with a disposition to weigh candidly the evidence that can be brought forward of a supernatural origin. A man well acquainted with the preceptive parts of the New Testament, cannot help, unless he is completely devoid of candor, regarding the question of its origin as a grave and interesting one. He must feel in reference to its claims, not as he would in reference to the claims of a mere stranger, far less of one whom he knows to be a fool, and suspects to be a knave, but as he would in reference to the

claims of a person of whose wisdom and worth he had reason to think highly. The claims are of such a kind, and the consequences of admitting them are so momentous, that even, with all these favorable presumptions, they are not to be admitted without satisfactory evidence; but they obviously deserve to be examined, and respectfully and diligently examined.

But this is not all. A person in a great measure ignorant of what true Christianity is, as a moral as well as a doctrinal system, may, without much difficulty, be persuaded by an ingenious sceptic or unbeliever, that that religion, like so many others, has originated in imposture or delusion, or in a mixture of both. It is to ignorance of Christianity, as its principal intellectual cause, that we are disposed to trace the fearfully extensive success of infidel philosophy among the nominal Christians of the continent of Europe in the period immediately preceding the French Revolution. But on a person well informed as to the moral part of Christianity, all such ingenious sophistry will be thrown away. He is in possession of information which satisfies him that all those hypotheses, on one or other of which the denial of the truth and divinity of Christianity must proceed, are altogether untenable. There is a character of uniform, sober, practical, good sense, belonging to the morality of the New Testament, which makes it one of the most improbable of all things, that its writers should have been the dupes either of their own imagination or of a designing impostor: and there is a sustained and apparently altogether unassumed and natural air of "simplicity and godly sincerity," which forbids us, except on the most satisfactory evidence, to admit that they who wore it were other than what they seem to be, honest men. To the question, Were the men who delivered these moral maxims, fools or knaves, or a mixture of both? Were they stupid dupes or wicked impostors? the only reasonable answer is, the thing is barely possible, it is in the very highest degree improbable. Evidence tenfold more strong than infidel philosophy has ever dreamed of, would be necessary to give anything like verisimilitude to any of these hypotheses, on one or other of which must be built the disproof of the claims of Christianity on the attention, and faith, and obedience of mankind.

There is still another aspect in which the morality of Christianity may be considered, in reference to the evidence of the Divine origin of that religion. Viewed in all its bearings, it seems to be of the nature of a moral miracle. Compare the morality of the New Testament with the morality of ancient philosophy; compare Jesus with Socrates; and Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, with Epictetus, or Plato, or Seneca, or Marcus Antoninus. The difference is prodigious; the superiority is immeasurable. Now, how are we to account for this difference, this superiority? On the supposition that the writers of the New Testament were uninspired men, we apprehend it is utterly unaccountable. Nothing but the admission, that they were men who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God, can enable us satisfactorily to explain the undoubted fact, that the purest and most perfect system of morality which the world has ever seen; the system that discovers the justest and widest views of the Divine character and government, and the deepest in-

sight into the recesses of human nature, proceeded not from the philosophers of Egypt or of India, of Greece or of Rome, but from the carpenter of Nazareth and his uneducated disciples.[1]

Such thoughts naturally rise in the mind of every reflecting man, on reading such a passage as that of which our text forms a part, and are well fitted to strengthen our conviction, that we have not followed "cunningly devised fables," when we have yielded credence to the claims and doctrines of Jesus Christ and his apostles. It is, however, full time that we set ourselves to the consideration of the words which are to form the subject of our present discourse: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

The duty here enjoined, and the motive by which it is enforced, are obviously the two topics to which our attention must be successively directed in the sequel; but to illustrate either with advantage, it will be necessary to make a few remarks, having for their object to explain something that is obscure in the phraseology, and to disentangle something that is involved in the construction of the sentence which lies before us.

I.—INTRODUCTORY EXPLICATORY OBSERVATIONS.

The word rendered "ordinance,"[2] is the term which is usually and properly rendered "creature." It is the word that occurs when the gospel is commanded to be "preached to every creature," and is said to have been "preached to every creature under heaven:" when the "whole creation," or "every creature," is said to "groan and travail in pain;" and when every one who is in Christ is said to be "a new creature."[3] The literal rendering is, "Submit yourselves to every human creature." Some interpreters, most unsuccessfully, have attempted to explain the passage on the principle that this is its meaning here.[4] Our translators, perceiving that the nature of things, equally with the scope of the passage, made such a version inadmissible, have given to the word a figurative signification. They consider it as equivalent to ordinance, or institution, or appointment, all of which are, as it were, the creatures of those who ordain, institute, or appoint them.[5]

Still, however, it seems a strange injunction, "Submit yourselves

[1] A fuller illustration of these remarks on the bearing of christian morality on christian evidence, will be found in the author's Introductory Essay to Collins' edition of Venn's "Complete Duty of Man."

[2] Κτίσις. [3] Mark xvi. 14. Col. i. 23. Rom. viii. 19–22. 2 Cor. v. 17.

[4] Sherlock. Grotius conjectures that the original reading may have been κρίσει. The conjecture is ingenious, but entirely unsupported. It is a most instructive fact, that, so far as I know, no mere conjecture as to the original text of the New Testament has ever been confirmed by subsequent examination of Codices.

[5] Κτίσιν ἀνθρωπίνην τὰς ἀρχὰς λέγει τὰς χειροτονητὰς ὑπὸ τῶν βασιλέων, ἢ καὶ αὐτοὺς τοὺς βασιλεῖς καθότι καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων ἐτάχθησαν ἤτοι ἐτέθησαν, οἶδε γαρ ἡ γραφὴ καὶ τὴν θέσιν, κτίσιν καλεῖν.—Œcumenius.

to every human institution." Surely there are many human institutions or ordinances to which a Christian is not bound to submit; surely there are not a few human institutions or ordinances to which a Christian is bound not to submit. The injunction plainly requires limitation: and we apprehend it receives it.

The concluding phrase of the 13th verse, "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well," is commonly connected with the words which immediately precede it, as if it were intended to express the object which the king, or supreme magistrate, has in view in appointing deputies. It appears to us far more natural to connect it with the word "ordinance;" and to view it as intended to define the particular class of human ordinances which the apostle refers to, when he commands Christians to be subject to every one of them. It is more than doubtful whether kings have always, or usually, had this as their object in appointing governors; but there can be no doubt this is the end of civil government, and is the reason why men are bound to submit to it. "Submit yourselves to every human ordinance, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well." This does not require any change in the translation, it only requires you to place a comma after the words, "sent by him."

This command, "Submit yourselves to every human ordinance, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well," is, as it were, the trunk of the injunction; the phrases, "for the Lord's sake," and "whether to the king, as supreme, and to governors, as those sent by him," are, as it were, branches that spring out of it. According to the genius of the English language, the precept would run thus: 'Submit yourselves, for the Lord's sake, to every ordinance of man, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well, whether to the king, as supreme, or to governors, as to them who are sent by him.'

This mode of construing the passage, not only gives a definite reference to the very general term "ordinance," or institution; it also enables us to account for the apostle using the somewhat strange expression in reference to civil government, "ordinance *of man*, or *human* institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well." The persons immediately addressed by the apostles were Jews, or proselytes who had imbibed Jewish modes of thought. Jews held themselves bound to be subject to the *Divine* ordinance of civil magistracy, as laid down in their Scriptures. That ordinance, whether embodied in Moses or in the Judges, or in the Davidical Kings, they regarded as entitled to obedience; but as to *human* institutions for this purpose, they seem very generally to have doubted, and many of them to have explicitly denied, that they were obligatory on the chosen people of God. If they yielded obedience, it was rather as a matter of expediency than of obligation; they submitted "for wrath's sake," that is, to avoid punishment, rather than "for conscience' sake," that is, because God had so willed it. These views were very probably carried by many of the Jewish converts into their new profession; and there seems to be a peculiar propriety in the apostle, after having described their privileges and immunities

as Christians in such lofty language, borrowed from the peculiarities of the Jewish people under the former economy; after having represented them as "the chosen race, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people, the people of God;" putting them in mind that those privileges were all of a spiritual nature, and that with regard to human institutions, and especially with regard to human institutions for the purposes of civil government, they were just on a level with the rest of mankind, with the rest of their fellow-citizens; possessed of the same rights, liable to the same obligations.

II.—THE DUTY ENJOINED; SUBJECTION TO THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT, IN THE PERSONS OF ALL ITS LEGAL ADMINISTRATORS.

We are now prepared to proceed to consider the duty here enjoined on Christians: Subjection to the civil government of the country where they reside, in the persons of all its legal administrators. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well: whether to the king, as supreme; or to governors, as those sent by him."

The description of civil government here given, first calls for consideration. It is described as "an ordinance or institution for the punishment of all evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well." The great design of civil government is, to protect the liberties, properties, and lives of mankind, living together in society. For this purpose, laws with suitable sanctions are enacted and executed, and officers are created for the enactment, promulgation, and execution of these laws. With reference to civil government, he and he only is an evil-doer who violates the law; and it is enough to entitle a man, in the estimation of the magistrate, to the appellation of one who does well, if he but obey the law. With sin, as sin, the magistrate has nothing to do. It is only when sin becomes crime, a violation of law, and infringement of civil order, that it comes under his cognizance. The design, then, of magistracy is "for the punishment of evil-doers," who break the laws enacted for the protection of liberty, property, reputation, and life; and "for the praise," that is, for the reward of those "who do well" by keeping these laws; giving them that protection and encouragement which, as has been very justly remarked, are the only rewards which good subjects can reasonably expect from their civil governors.[1]

Civil government is farther described as "an ordinance of man," or "a human institution," for this purpose. It is, indeed, the doctrine of the New Testament, that civil government, in one sense, and that an important one, is a Divine institution, an ordinance of God; but that doctrine, rightly understood, is in no way inconsistent with the doctrine that, in another sense, it is a human institution, the ordinance of man. Civil government is of God, so as to lay a foundation for a Divine moral obligation on those subject to it to yield obedience. Some have held that magistracy is of God merely as all things are of God, as the famine and the pestilence, as slavery and

[1] "Reward cannot, properly, be the sanction of *human* laws."—WARBURTON.

war, are of him. Those who take this view err by defect; for this could lay no foundation for a claim on obedience. Others err by excess, who hold that magistracy is a direct, express Divine institution. It does not stand on the same foundation as the priesthood under the law, or the christian ministry under the gospel. The magistracy of the Jews under the law was the result of a direct Divine appointment; but not the magistracy of any other people. It does not stand even on the same ground as marriage, which was formally instituted. It occupies similar ground with the social state, agriculture, or commerce. It naturally rises out of the constitution of men's minds, which is God's work, and the circumstances of their situation, which are the result of his providence; and it is highly conducive to the security and well-being of mankind, which we know must be agreeable to the will of Him whose nature, as well as name, is love, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.

All this is perfectly consistent with civil government being a human ordinance or institution. It is the work of man's faculties, called forth by the circumstances in which he is placed, out of which arises the variety of form which the general institution bears in different countries and in different ages: thus far it is the work of man; and it is the work of God, just inasmuch as he endows man with these faculties, and places him in the circumstances which call them forth to exertion. To borrow the illustration of one of the greatest of our writers on the subject of government: "To say, because civil magistracy is ordained of God, therefore it cannot be the ordinance of man, is as if you said, 'God ordained the temple, therefore it was not built by masons; he ordained the snuffers, therefore they were not made by a smith.'[1]"

Now, the duty of Christians to this "human ordinance" of civil magistracy. is to "submit themselves" to it, practically to acknowledge its authority. It is the duty of a Christian to yield obedience to all laws of the government under which he lives, that are not inconsistent with the law of God. When the human ordinance contradicts the Divine ordinance, requiring us to do what God forbids, or forbidding us to do what God requires, the rule is plain: "We ought to obey God rather than man.'"[2]

Nothing short of this, however, can warrant a Christian to withhold obedience from a law of the government under which, in the providence of God, he is placed; and even when conscience may compel him to non-obedience, he is quietly and patiently to suffer the penalty which the law imposes on his non-obedience. While obliged by the law of God in such a case not to obey the law of man, he is equally obliged, while the government continues to be acknowledged by the community of which he forms a part, not to resist it. He may, he ought to, use every means which the constitution of his country puts in his power to have the law improved;[3] but while it continues in force, however unwise and iniquitous, if it does not re-

[1] Harrington.

[2] Acts v. 29.

[3] "A *timely*, *steady*, and *mild* resistance, on *legal* grounds, to *every* unlawful stretch of power (as in the well-known case of the ship-money), will prove the most effectual means, if *uniformly* resorted to, for preventing the occurrence of those desperate and extreme cases, which call for violent and dangerous remedies."—ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

quire him to sin, he must obey it; and even when it does require him to sin, while he must by no means obey it, he must submit to the punishment, however unjust, which the law denounces against him.

One of the most important modes of submission to civil government is the payment of tribute; and this, like all the other duties we owe to our rulers, is to be regulated by the principle already laid down. We must not refuse, we must not seek to evade, the payment of a tax, merely because we think it unwise or unequal. It is only in the case of government requiring us to pay a tax for what we consider as a sinful object, that we are entitled to refuse compliance, and even in that case we are bound to submit to the penalty which the law appoints for our non-compliance.

Under the general name of submission are included also that respect and reverence with which the institution of civil government should be regarded by all subjects. "To despise government, and speak evil of dignities," are sins most decidedly condemned in the law of Christ; and the christian apostle has given his sanction to the command of the Jewish lawgiver: "Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people." Words are the signs of thought: the expressions of sentiment and feeling. They are therefore far from being harmless in themselves, and they are very far from being harmless in their consequences. The man who indulges his tongue in contumelious revilings against the authorities of the land, using language fitted to bring government itself into contempt, is a dangerous enemy of his country's weal, as well as a direct and open violator of the express command of God.[1]

It is highly desirable that the personal character of the magistrate should give additional lustre to his official dignity; while it is deeply to be regretted that the follies and faults of those who fill public stations have so often excited a most pernicious influence, in diminishing the authority of the laws, by making it impossible personally to respect their administrators. It is well remarked by Hooker, that "great caution must be used, that we neither be emboldened to follow them in evil, whom, for authority's sake, we must honor, nor induced in authority to dishonor them whom, as examples, we must not follow."

To prevent misapprehensions, it is needful to remark here, that particular civil governments may be so faulty in their constitution, or so corrupt in their administration, that it may not only be lawful, but obligatory, on the subjects, to seek improvement by thorough change, depriving of power those who have abused it, and organizing a new form of civil rule which will answer its objects; and that there is certainly nothing in the law of Christ which exempts his followers from an obligation to act the part of good citizens in such circumstances; but it is also of importance to add, that nothing short of the demonstrated impracticability of the improvement of a government by constitutional measures, and of the moral certainty of the great body of the citizens being really desirous of a change, can warrant individuals to refuse submission to the form of civil rule under which

2 Pet. ii. 10. Exod. xxii. 28. Acts xxiii. 5. James iii. 1-6.

they live, whatever may be the imperfections and faults by which it is characterized.

It deserves notice, also, before we close our observations on this head, that the apostle's command is, "Submit yourselves to *every* ordinance of man for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well." These words, taken by themselves, might mean,—Submit yourselves to civil government, whatever form it may wear; monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, or any conceivable combination of these elements; and there can be no question that in this sense the words would express the Christian's duty. It is equally the duty of the Christian, if he live in Austria, to submit to monarchy; if he live in America, to submit to democracy; if he live in Great Britain, to submit to our mixed government of king, lords, and commons; but from the context it is plain that the reference is not to different forms of civil rule in different countries, but to the different organs of civil rule in the same country. "Whether to the king," that is, to the Roman emperor, within the limits of whose wide dominions those addressed by the apostle lived, "or to governors sent by him," that is, to the proconsuls, or procurators, deputed by the emperor to perform the offices of government in the distant parts of the empire. To all the officers by whom the law is administered, Christians are to render obedience. Whether they be persons in a higher station or in a lower; whatever be the nature or the denomination of their office; whether the jurisdiction extend over the whole land, or be limited to a county or to a parish; to every one of the persons appointed to execute the laws, we are bound to render obedience in all those particulars in which he is authorized to demand it. So much for the illustration of the duty enjoined by the apostle.

III.—THE MOTIVE OF THE DUTY OF CIVIL OBEDIENCE: "FOR THE LORD'S SAKE."

Let us now turn our attention to the motives by which the apostle enforces this duty. These are unfolded in the words, "For the Lord's sake; for so is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." "The Lord" is here as generally in the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians are to yield obedience to the civil government under which they live, "for *his* sake;" for the sake of his commandment; for the sake of his example; for the sake of his cause.

First, Christians are to obey the civil government under which they live, for the sake of Christ's commandment. Now, what is his commandment? This was his commandment when he was on earth, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," that is, give to the civil government its due; and, if you look into the writings of the apostles, you will find that the due of civil government is obedience, tribute, and honor. These apostles had the mind of Christ, and they thus express it: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the or-

dinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing. Render therefore to them all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." "Put them in mind," says Paul to Titus, "to be subject to principalities and powers; to obey magistrates." They who "despise government," who are "presumptuous, self-willed," and "not afraid to speak evil of dignities," are, according to Peter, among "the unjust whom the Lord knows how to reserve unto the day of judgment to be punished." [1]

It may be said "the commandment of the Lord," in these words, "is pure," [2] clear as crystal; but how are we to know what is that civil government to which they refer? We know that the civil government established among the Jews was God's ordinance to them. We know that the Roman government was God's ordinance to the primitive Christians; but how are we to know what civil government is God's ordinance to us? The true answer to that is given by Dr. Paley: "It is the will of God that the happiness of human life be promoted. Civil society conduces to that end. Civil societies cannot be upholden, unless in each the interest of the whole society be binding on every part and member of it. So long as the established government cannot be resisted or changed without public inconveniency, it is the will of God that the established government be obeyed." We have not the same means of judging of any particular government that it is God's ordinance to us, as those had whom the apostles Paul and Peter plainly told, that the Roman government was the ordinance of God to them; but we have sufficient means of ascertaining that point; and when, by their use, we have come to the conclusion, that the government under which we live is so, then the obligation to obedience, arising out of the commandment of our Lord, binds us as strongly as it bound them.

Happily for us, my brethren, there is no difficulty in coming to a determination. On the one hand, our civil constitution is based on so many just principles—is upon the whole, compared to most other governments, so well administered, and contains within itself such a deep-seated and powerful spring of improvement, that we can have no reasonable doubt that, though an ordinance of man, it is also the ordinance of God to us; while, on the other hand, the ruling power in this country, supported, as it is, by the great body of the subjects giving their approbation to the principles on which it is founded, is so powerful, that to think of resisting it would not only be highly criminal, but folly almost amounting to madness. "For the Lord's sake," then, let us submit ourselves to this ordinance of man, whether

[1] Matt. xxii. 21. Rom. xiii. 1–7. Tit. iii. 1 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10. [2] Psal. xix. 8.

to the queen, as supreme, or to inferior magistrates, as commissioned by her.

Secondly, Christians are to obey the civil government under which they live, for the sake of the example of the Lord. We are distinctly informed by our apostle in the context, that "Christ has left us an example, that we should walk in his steps."[1] It is the duty of his followers "to be in the world as he was in the world," and to "walk even as he also walked." "The life of our Lord Jesus should be manifested in our mortal bodies;" our lives should be the counterpart of his. There is caution, however, no doubt necessary, in applying the example of Christ as a rule of conduct. We ought always to act on the principles on which he acted; and when our circumstances coincide with his, we cannot too exactly copy his conduct. But his circumstances and ours are often very different; so that an action which was right in him, might be wrong in us. Knowing the hearts of men, for example, he spoke to hypocrites in a way that it would be presumptuous in us to speak to any man. His situation, in reference to the civil government under which he was placed, was so different from that in which we stand to the civil government under which we are placed, that we need caution in reasoning from the manner in which he acted to the manner in which we ought to act; yet still his example here, and in every other instance, is replete with instruction. He made it plain that he would not permit political considerations to turn him aside from his great work. The political state of the world very much needed improvement; but his directly interfering in it would have thrown obstacles in the way of gaining his great object—an object which, when gained, will ultimately put everything right. He did not "cry nor strive." He took no part in the political controversies of his times. "He did no violence;" he stirred up no seditions.[2] He rendered to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. We should err if we were to draw the conclusion, that we ought to have as little to do with politics as Jesus Christ had; for our place, as citizens of a free commonwealth, is very different from his, who had no political standing at all in the existing forms of rule, whether Jewish or Roman; but we are taught, that as Christians we are to place the religious above the political; the kingdom not of this world, above every worldly kingdom; that the citizen of heaven must not be sunk either in the citizen of Britain or the citizen of the world; that where there is no prospect of our improving political institutions, it is wisest to let them alone; and that if he was uniformly obedient and submissive to one of the worst of human governments, it ill becomes us to be factious, and seditious, and disobedient, under a system of civil rule, which, though far, very far indeed, from being perfect, is yet among the best which the world has yet seen.

It is, however, chiefly, we apprehend, to the bearing which their submission to the civil government is likely to have on the *cause* of Christ, that the apostle refers in the words before us. I therefore go on to remark, in the third place, that Christians are bound to obey the civil government under which they are placed, for the sake of the cause of the Lord. Among the false charges brought against the

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 21. [2] Isa. xlii. 2; liii. 9.

primitive Christians, this was one,—they were bad subjects; and their refusal to join in the rites of the idolatrous religion, sanctioned by public authority, seemed to give plausibility to the charge. It deserves notice, that this is a charge which, in all ages, has been brought against the people of God by their enemies. The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, when God turned again the captivity of his people, branded Jerusalem as "the rebellious and the bad city—a city hurtful unto kings and provinces, whose inhabitants had moved sedition of old time;" and Haman, "that wicked adversary and enemy," described the Jews as "a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of the kingdom; whose laws were diverse from all people, and who keep not the king's laws: whom it was therefore not for the king's profit to suffer."[1] "There was a strong report," says one of the fathers of the church,[2] commenting on the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Romans, "that the apostles were seditious and innovators, and that their principles and practices tended to the subversion of the common laws." So far as this report was credited, it was plainly calculated, in a variety of ways, to impede the progress of Christianity; and nothing was so much fitted to give currency and credit to the calumny, as a neglect or violation on the part of Christians of the injunction contained in the text. This was sure to expose them to the vengeance of the laws, and so to deprive them of the power of extending Christianity; while discredit was cast on the christian cause as hostile to the order of civil society. On the contrary, nothing was better fitted to live down the calumny, than a scrupulous and conscientious compliance with the injunction. When it was found that no class of subjects so readily obeyed all the laws of the empire, except those which required what was inconsistent with the laws of Christ, while even in this case they meekly submitted to the consequences of their non-compliance, though these often were torture and death; that while they refused to give their property for the support of idolatry, they patiently took the spoiling of their goods, and readily rendered "tribute to whom tribute was due, custom to whom custom was due," the conclusion must have forced itself on every reflecting mind: 'These are peaceable, orderly men, and there is nothing in their religion inconsistent with the welfare of the state.' In this way their well-doing was fitted to "put to silence"[3] the ignorant and malignant calumnies of their foolish and unprincipled accusers. Such an even tenor of good conduct, such an onward course of well-doing, was better fitted to silence adversaries than the most elaborate apologies and defences.

The principle on which the apostolic injunction proceeds, is one applicable to all countries and ages. If Christians wish to recommend the religion they profess, they must be exemplary in the discharge of all the duties of domestic and social relative life; and few things are more fitted to prejudice worldly men against religion generally, or against particular forms of religion, than the manifestation on the part

[1] Ezra iv. 12. Esth. iii. 8. [2] Chrysostom.

[3] The word φιμοῦν, rendered *put to silence*, properly signifies *to muzzle;* which, in one expressive word, shows the apostle's opinion of these adversaries of Christianity. They belonged to the κύνες, of which Paul warns the Philippians.—Ch. iii. 2.

of their professors of a disposition to evade the laws, or violate the order, or disorganize the constitution of civil society.

At the same time it must not be forgotten, that the interests of genuine Christianity may be as really injured by the maintenance and exemplification of slavish principles as by the maintenance and exemplification of revolutionary principles; and that the true medium is not so happily described in the verse which follows our text, the thinking, and feeling, and acting as free men, guarding against making our liberty a cloak of wickedness, conducting ourselves always as the servants of God, honoring all men, loving the brotherhood, fearing God, honoring the king. Thus have I briefly illustrated the apostolic injunction, "Submit yourselves to every human ordinance, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well;" and the powerful motive by which it is enforced, "for the Lord's sake," from a regard to the law, the example, and the cause of him who is Lord of all; and, with a peculiar emphasis, "OUR Lord Jesus."

The discourse has been throughout practical, so that it stands in little need of what is ordinarily called improvement. Almost all that requires to be said in this way is, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."[1] It is an easy matter for us to do them, when compared with those to whom they were originally addressed; and, of course, if we fail, our conduct is doubly criminal.

I conclude with a reflection which, I am sure, must have already suggested itself to your minds. If we should submit ourselves to "every ordinance of man, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well," should we not much more submit ourselves to every ordinance, every institution, every appointment of God, all of which have for their object the glory of his great name and the happiness of his intelligent creatures? If we ought to be obedient to human governments, though necessarily imperfect, faulty both in their constitution and administration, how readily should we yield obedience to the Divine government, which both in principle and administration is absolutely perfect, being formed and conducted by him who is infinite in knowledge and wisdom, and power, and righteousness, and benignity. If we have human governors to whom our bodies are subject, should we not, much rather in our spirits, be subject to the King of souls? "He is a Rock, his work is perfect; all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he." "His work" as a legislator, governor, or judge, "is most honorable and glorious, and his righteousness endureth forever."[2] How high a privilege should we account it to be the subjects of such a government! What folly and wickedness must it be to neglect or violate any of its laws! What madness to expose ourselves to the consequences of such violation! If, then, every soul should be subject to the powers that be, though they once were not, and may very likely, ere long, cease to be: should not every soul be subject to that power which was, and is, and ever shall be? Is it not of supreme importance that we should be loyal subjects of the King of the universe, the immortal, invisible, only wise God?

[1] John xiii. 17. [2] Deut. xxxii. 4. Psal. cxi. 3.

Oh, let all of us see that our relations to Him be in a safe and satisfactory state! Have we acquainted ourselves with Him as he has manifested himself "in the face" of his only begotten, his visible image, the great revealer of the unseen, the invisible One, and are we at peace with him? It once was otherwise; we were at war with him. Mad, impious rebellion! Has the manifestation of his authority and grace quelled the rebel principles within, brought every high thing down into subjection to him, and sweetly constrained us to cast from us the weapons we had so foolishly, so wickedly, wielded against him? If not, the sooner such a change take place, the better; for "HE beareth not the sword in vain."

If this all-important change has taken place, let us prove that it has taken place by submitting cordially to his authority, as administered by HIM whom he has "set on his holy hill of Zion." Let us "serve him without fear in holiness, and righteouness, all the days of our lives." Let us "walk in all his ordinances and commandments blameless; let us "count his precepts concerning all things to be right; let us hate every false way;" [1] and let us show our supreme regard to his authority, equally, by cheerfully doing everything which our civil rulers require of us, however disagreeable to us, if only not inconsistent with his law, because he has commanded it; and by obstinately refusing to do anything which they command us, however deeply it may involve our worldly interests, which is inconsistent with his law, because he has forbidden it.

It is, indeed, inward subjection to His authority, that alone can secure high-principled and duly-regulated subjection to every lawful inferior authority. It has been justly remarked, that when the spirit of the high-minded sinner has been brought down by the gospel, and he has bowed with a broken and contrite heart to the sceptre of the Saviour's grace, the humble subjection of his conscience to God, which then takes place, involves in it a meek and humble spirit of submission to all the authority which that God has vested in any of his creatures. The obedience which he yields as a child, as a servant, as a subject, being yielded from religious principles, becomes obedience to God; and "whatsoever he does henceforward, "he does it heartily to the Lord and not to man." [2] And hence it is that the christian minister feels that he never acts more the part of a good citizen, never employs means more fitted for improving the whole scene of domestic and social and political life, than when he urges on men, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" and beseeches them, on the ground of the great atonement, to be "reconciled to God." [3]

[1] Luke i. 6, 74, 75. Psal. cxix. 128. [2] Col. iii. 23.

[3] The whole subject of this discourse is more fully discussed by the author, in his treatise entitled "The Law of Christ respecting Civil Obedience, especially in the Payment of Tribute."

DISCOURSE XI.

THE CONDITION AND DUTY OF CHRISTIANS "AS FREE," YET "AS THE SERVANTS OF GOD."

1 Pet. ii. 16.—As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.[1]

These words contain in them a very instructive view of the condition and duty of Christians, to the illustration and improvement of which I design to devote the following discourse. The condition of Christians is described as at once a condition of liberty and subjection. They are "free," and yet servants, "the servants of God." The duty of Christians is stated with a reference to their condition: they are to conduct themselves agreeably to their condition, as free, and as the servants of God; they are to assert and use their liberty; they are not to abuse their liberty; they are to exemplify or act out their subjection. Such is the outline which I will attempt to fill up in the sequel.

I—THE CONDITION OF CHRISTIANS.

§ 1.—*They are free.*

Let us then, in the first place, attend to the account contained in the text of the condition of Christians. They are "free," yet "the servants of God." Christians are a peculiar people. They are freemen among slaves, the servants of God among the servants of the wicked one. This was not always the case. The common condition of the race was originally theirs. They were slaves both in condition and in character, and they were rebels. But "the Son has made them free, and they are free indeed;" and the determined rebel has become a loyal subject. "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature," and to him there is a new creation. "Old things have passed away, and all things have become new." Christians are free: free in reference to God; free in reference to man; free in reference to the powers and principles of evil.

Let us shortly attend to these various aspects of the Christian's freedom.

(1.) *Free in reference to God.*

First, Christians are free in reference to God. They are "the Lord's freemen."[2] By this we do not mean that they are not under the

[1] See note A.

[2] 1 Cor. vii. 22.

strongest obligations to conform their minds and wills to the mind and will of God, and to regulate the whole of their temper and conduct according to the revelation of that mind and will contained in his word. They are not free in the sense of being "without law to God;" to be so would be the reverse of a privilege; they "are under the law to Christ."[1] Yet still in a very important sense they are free, both as to condition and character, in reference to God; and these two forms or species of freedom are closely connected, the latter being the result and manifestation of the former.

The relation in which the Christian, before conversion, stood to God in consequence of sin, was that of a condemned criminal; and the character by which he was distinguished was that of a sullen slave, conscious of having exposed himself to punishment for his indolence and unfaithfulness, and equally hating his Master and his work. "All have sinned, all have lost the approbation of God,"[2] all have incurred the condemning sentence of the divine law; and

> "Chains are the portion of revolted man—
> Stripes and a dungeon."[3]

They are, as it were, shut up in prison, reserved for punishment, and bound by the fetters of guilt, which no created power can break, no created ingenuity unlock.

In this state, of which no sinner is entirely unconscious, the disposition cherished by him towards God is, must be, not that of an affectionate child or a loyal subject, but that of a slave punished for disobedience, bearing a grudge towards his master, as if the unreasonableness of the task assigned him, rather than his own wilful neglect and disobedience, were the true cause of the evils he feels or fears. He is an entire stranger to the love of God, so that free voluntary obedience is a moral impossibility; and if at any time he assume the appearance of submission, and do those actions which the law requires, such conduct springs entirely from the principles of servile fear or mercenary expectation. This is the natural condition and character of all men in reference to God. This was once the condition and character of every Christian.

But the condemned criminal has become a pardoned, accepted child; the slave has obtained both the state and the disposition of a freeman. The prison doors have been thrown open, the fetters of guilt have been unloosed, the prisoner has gone forth. Love has taken the place of dislike, confidence of jealousy, joyful hope of "the fear that had torment;" and while the pardoned, renewed sinner, "keeps God's precepts," "he walks at liberty."

The manner in which this change is produced, must be familiar to the mind of every one who properly understands even the "principles of the doctrines of Christ," "the first principles of the oracles of God."[4] It is by the faith of the truth as it is in Jesus, that man, the criminal and slave, is introduced into the state, and formed to the character, of a spiritual freeman. Christ Jesus, the only begotten of God, moved by sovereign love, has by the appointment of his Father,

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 21.
[2] Rom. iii. 23. Δόξα.—John v. 41–44.
[3] Cowper.
[4] Heb. vi. 1 · v. 12.

done and suffered, as the substitute of man, all that was necessary to make the salvation of sinners perfectly consistent with, gloriously illustrative of, the holiness and justice, as well as the pity and benignity of the Divine character. That wondrous work of "God manifest in the flesh," is made the subject of a plain, well-accredited revelation. In the case of all the saved, by a sovereign Divine influence, the mind is so fixed on this revelation, in its meaning and evidence, as to understand and believe it. This is the faith of the gospel.

This faith, by Divine appointment, brings the sinner within the saving power of the atonement. He is redeemed from the curse of the law through him who became a curse in his stead; the blessing of Abraham, even a free and full justification, by believing, comes on him; and he obtains larger and larger measures of the promised Spirit, by believing. "Being justified by faith, he has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and has access to God," as his father and friend, "by this faith, in reference to the grace of God;" and he "stands" in this state of reconciliation and favorable fellowship, "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." "There is no more condemnation to him, being in Christ Jesus; and he walks no more after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The Spirit of Christ the Lord dwells in him, and "where the Spirit of the Lord," which is a free spirit, is, "there is liberty." The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, given to him, and he loves him who has first, and so, loved him. And his love finds its natural expression in conformity to God's mind and will, and in obedience to his commandments. It is no longer the slave, toiling at intervals at a task which he abhors, to secure the morsel or to escape the lash; it is an enlightened, renewed creature, embracing what he sees to be true, and doing what he knows to be right, following out the impulses of his new nature; and doing all this the more readily, because he knows that, in doing so, he walks in the light of his heavenly Father's countenance, enjoying an elevating consciousness of fellowship of mind and heart with the only wise, the immaculately holy, the infinitely benignant, the ever-blessed God; and because he has learned, by painful experience, "that the way of the transgressor," even of "the backslider in heart," "is hard," and that holiness and happiness are, in the nature of things, as well as by the express Divine appointment, so closely conjoined, as to be all but identified with each other. He "knows the truth, and the truth makes him free."[1]

The whole of the Christian's obedience, when he acts like himself, has this character of true-hearted freedom. With regard to a very large portion of his duties, he so distinctly sees their reasonableness and excellence, and the important and blissful purposes which obedience is fitted to secure, that he considers the having this peaceful, joyful path, through a world full of sin and misery, so clearly pointed out in the law of the Lord, as one of the greatest proofs of the kindness of his God and his Father. He sees and feels that God has "granted him his law graciously." The language of his heart is, "O! how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day:" "Great peace

[1] Rom. v. 1, 2; viii 1 2 Cor. iii. 17.

have they who love thy law, nothing can offend them:" "I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart;" "I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I love;" "I will keep thy laws continually forever and ever, and I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts." [1] And if in some cases he may feel a difficulty in perceiving the reason of a particular piece of dutiful exertion, or suffering, or sacrifice, required of him, the deep-seated conviction of the infinite wisdom and power of Jehovah, constantly influenced by holy love, which the manifestation of God in the person and work of his Son, has lodged in his mind, makes him cheerfully comply with the requisition, just because it is HIS.

The measure of this spiritual liberty obviously depends on the measure of faith. In proportion to the clearness of our apprehensions, and the firmness of our persuasion of "the truth as it is in Jesus," will be the alacrity and delight with which, "delivered out of the hands of our" spiritual "enemies, we serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness." [2] The spirit of bondage, which leads Christians again to fear, with the fear which hath torment, which fetters their minds and hearts, grows powerful just as saving truth is overlooked or misapprehended; and can be cast out of the heart only by that "perfect love," which grows out of our knowing and believing the love which God has for us, and which he has manifested in giving his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The character of manly, christian, affectionate freedom, which the knowledge and faith of the truth as it is in Jesus, under Divine influence, produces, renders unnecessary and unsuitable such an institution as the Mosaic law, an institution adapted to the Church in its infant state. That institution, having served its purpose, has been abrogated; and all attempts, and they have been numerous, to introduce into the Christian Church any system of a similar character, are foolish and criminal; an invasion equally of the prerogative of Christ, and of the privileges of his people. So much for the Christian's freedom in reference to God.

2.) *Free in reference to Man.*

Let us now look at the second aspect of the Christian's freedom: He is free in reference to man.

When we say that the Christian is free in reference to man, we do not mean to say that he is not under obligation to seek the happiness of his fellow-men, and especially of his fellow-Christians; or to deny that, in prosecuting this end, he is to imitate the conduct of his Lord, who "came not to be ministered to, but to minister." Christians are "to submit themselves one to another, in the fear of God;" they are all of them to be "subject one to another," and "by love to serve one another." The apostle's being "free from all men," was not at all inconsistent with his being "the servant of all." "He who would be chief among his brethren, must be the servant of all." "He that is greatest among you," says our Lord, "shall be your servant." [3]

[1] Psal. cxix. 29, 163, 32, 16, 44, 45. [2] Luke i. 74.
[3] Eph. v. 21. 1 Pet. v. 5. Gal. v. 13. Matt. xx. 28. 1 Cor. ix. 19. Luke xxii. 26.

Nor do we mean to say that the Christian is emancipated from civil authority, and is not bound to "be subject to the powers that be," or that he cannot fill the place of a domestic servant, and discharge its duties. His relations and duties, as a member of civil or domestic society, are in no degree changed by his becoming a Christian.

Nor do we mean to say that the Christian may not be subjected to the most degrading servitude, being treated by a fellow-man as if he were as completely his property as his estate or his cattle. This has actually been the situation of a multitude of Christians. It is the situation of not a few at this moment; and oh, shame! the slaveholder, as well as the slave, bears the worthy name, Christian.

But we do mean to say, that the mind and conscience of the Christian are emancipated from human authority: that no human power has any right to dictate to him what he is to believe, and what he is to do in matters of religious and moral duty: and that, in the degree in which he is an enlightened Christian, he acts on the principle, that he ought to "call no man on earth master," but in the exercise of his own faculties, aided by the promised Spirit, to endeavor to ascertain what is the mind and will of the "One Master, who is in heaven," and having ascertained it, to "walk at liberty keeping his commandments."

There is a natural tendency in man to usurp spiritual authority over man; and what seems strange, there is a natural tendency, too, to submit to this usurpation. By far the greater part of mankind have no better reason for their religious opinions, ordinances, and usages, than that they have "received them by tradition from their fathers." [1] What is taught and received, as religious truth and duty, is to them nothing more than "the commandments of men." The great body even of those who assume to themselves the honorable appellation, free-thinkers, are nothing less than what that appellation expresses. They are, almost universally, the blind followers of their blind, self-chosen guides; the veriest slaves of human authority, in one of its least creditable forms.

When a man becomes a Christian, in the recognition of the supreme and sole authority, in all matters of religious truth and duty, of God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent, there is necessarily implied the renunciation of all human authority. If the one Master be in heaven, there can be no master on earth. A Christian, acting worthy of the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free, believes no doctrine but what he is persuaded Christ has taught; observes no ordinance but what he believes Christ has appointed; performs nothing as a duty but what he is convinced Christ has enjoined. Helpers of his faith, he gratefully acknowledges in all who will assist him in obtaining wider, clearer, more impressive views of the mind and will of the supreme Teacher and Sovereign; such he counts his greatest benefactors: but lords of his faith he will not recognize, even in the wisest and best of men. He feels that there is but one with whom he has to do, as authority, in religion; "one lawgiver, who can save and who can destroy;" [2] and that he must stand before HIS judgment-seat, and give an account of himself to HIM. The answer to the questions, What say the fathers? what say the reformers? what say the sym-

[1] 1 Pet. i. 18. Matt. xv. 9

[2] James iv. 12.

bolical books?—the answer to any or all of these questions, does not determine his faith: it is the answer to the question, What saith the Lord? "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"[1] which fixes his decision. This is the touchstone by which he examines all religious doctrines and institutions. "To the law, and to the testimony: if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."[2] To be the servants of men is unworthy of the condition and character of spiritual freemen, to which Christ by his Spirit, through the faith of the truth, hath raised all his people. Their judgments must not be guided, when they act like themselves they will not be guided, by the writings of Luther or Calvin, nor based on the decisions of councils, however venerable. They will honor their fellow-disciples, especially such of them as have obviously profited by the teaching of their common Master; but they will sit only at his feet, and take the law only from his mouth.

There is another aspect of the Christian's freedom, in reference to his fellow-men, that deserves to be cursorily noticed before leaving this part of our subject. Human approbation, in some form or other, is a leading object with the great body of mankind, and exercises a powerful influence over their conduct. They seek the praise, they fear the censure, and reproach, and revilings of men; and they fashion their conduct so as to secure the one and avoid the other. With the Christian, Divine approbation is the great object. He seeks "the honor which comes down from above;" and, in doing this, he is set free from the enslaving influence of the hopes and fears which spring out of an exaggerated estimate of the value of the good opinion of men. With him, "it is a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment;" for he believes that "there is one that judgeth him, that is the Lord."[3]

(3.)—*Free in reference to the Power and Principles of Evil.*

Let us now look at the third aspect of the Christian's condition as *free*. He is free in reference to the powers and principles of evil. By the powers of evil, I understand the devil, that crafty, and powerful, and active spiritual being, of whom we read so often in Scripture, and of whose personal existence I think no unprejudiced reader of the Sacred Volume can entertain a doubt; who introduced moral evil into our world in the beginning of the history of our race, and has been ceaselessly endeavoring, with but too much success, to uphold and extend its influence; and his subordinate agents, "the evil angels." By the principles of evil, I understand the various depraved propensities of our fallen nature, acted on by the present world, "things seen and temporal."

By these powers and principles all men are naturally enslaved. The evil spirit is "the god of this world;" he "worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience;" he "leads them captive at his will." They "are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father;" the things which he desires and delights in, "they will do," they choose

[1] Luke x. 26. [2] Isa. viii. 20. [3] 1 Cor. iv. 3.

to "do." [1] Though to a great degree the unconscious, they are not the less the devoted, servants of the wicked one.

When a man becomes a Christian, he is delivered from the power of Satan. "The prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive of the terrible one is delivered." The Christian by no means ceases on his conversion to be the object of the malignant attempts of his great enemy, who, "like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" [2]—like a cunning serpent, lies in wait to dart into the soul the poison and pollution of sin. But he ceases to be his slave: his new state of favor with God, secures for him the protection of a power, compared with which diabolical power is weakness; and the guidance of a wisdom, compared with which diabolical craft is folly: so that he can "tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon he can trample under foot:" and the good Spirit, by the instrumentality of his word, furnishes him with principles which enable him to baffle all Satan's devices, and frustrate all his attempts to regain his lost dominion.

Men are by nature not only the slaves of Satan, but they are represented as "serving divers lusts and pleasures," as the "servants of sin:" "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant," the slave, "of sin." The apostle represents them as so "the servants, the slaves of sin," as to be "freemen [3] so far as righteousness is concerned," that is, to be entirely uninfluenced by holy principle; to be wholly under the power of evil; "sin reigning over their mortal body," while they "obey it by means of the desires of the body," and "yield their members to it as the instruments of unrighteousness." Such were some, such were all, true Christians, previously to their conversion; but God be thanked, that they who were the servants of sin, have, by obeying from the heart the form of doctrine which has been delivered to them, been "made free from sin," freemen in reference to sin, and have become "the servants of righteousness;" no longer "yielding their members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, but yielding their members servants to righteousness unto holiness." [4]

By the faith of the truth they are so identified with Christ, as that his death, resurrection, and new life are theirs. They are brought under their influence, both justifying and sanctifying; "so that as he died unto sin once, and being raised from the dead dieth no more, death having no more dominion over him, but liveth to God, they also reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord:" and the consequence is, they no longer "let sin reign in their mortal body, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof;" neither do they "yield their members to it as instruments of unrighteousness, but they yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin no longer has dominion over them: for they are not under the law, but under grace." "Whoso is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." [5] The new nature is a holy nature, and, so far as a man possesses this nature, he does not, he cannot, sin.

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 4. 2 Tim. ii. 26. John viii. 44.
[2] Isa. xlix. 24. 1 Pet. v. 8.
[3] See note B.
[4] 1 John viii. 34. Rom. vi. 16–20.
[5] Rom. vi. 9–14. 1 John iii. 9.

And every man who possesses it at all, possesses it in such a degree as that he habitually hates and avoids sin. Not that any Christian in the present state is completely freed from the influence of depraved principle: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." While we are in the present state, "there is a law in our members which wars against the law of the mind;" but the Christian "consents to the law that it is good," "delights in the law of God after the inner man;" and though, "with the flesh," that is, so far as he is unrenewed, "he serves the law of sin," yet with the Spirit, that is, so far as he is renewed (and this constitutes his prevailing, abiding character), "he serves the law of God;" and though often, when he loses sight of the truth, which sanctifies as well as comforts, he is constrained to sigh out, "wretched man, who shall deliver me?" yet, habitually, he rejoices in the begun and advancing emancipation from the principles of evil, "thanking God through Jesus Christ," who hath delivered, who is delivering, and who will deliver: rejoicing that not only is "there no condemnation to him, being in Christ Jesus," but that the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has made him free from the law of sin and death." [1]

§ 2.—*Christians are the servants of God.*

Having made these cursory remarks on the condition of Christians as free,—free in reference to God, free in reference to man, free in reference to the powers and principles of evil; let us now for a little, attend to the second view of their condition. While in one point of the view they are free, in another, they are "servants, servants of God." These are by no means inconsistent representations. So far from this, it is only by becoming the servants of God that men can cease to be the slaves of Satan and sin. The only true liberty of which a dependent being like man is capable, is the free use of his faculties in the service of God. Independence, strictly speaking, belongs only to God. Man in seeking it, instead of obtaining, lost liberty. Seeking to be supreme lord of himself, refusing to be the servant of the best of beings, he necessarily became a slave of the worst. It is the very condition of our being, as creatures, that we serve; "we have not the liberty to choose whether we shall serve or not, all the liberty we have is to choose our master." [2]

Men in their apostate state are not God's servants. They are "the children not of obedience," as Christians are; they are "the children of disobedience." In one sense, indeed, all men are God's servants. They are all bound to submit to his authority; they are all employed by him in the execution of his purposes. But Christians are God's servants in a sense peculiar to themselves. They are his peculiar property; they have been formed by him to the character of his servants; they have voluntarily devoted themselves to his service; they habitually employ themselves in his service.

They are his servants, for they are his peculiar property. "All that is in heaven and in the earth is his." Men may renounce God's authority, but they cannot despoil him of any part of what belongs

[1] 1 John i. 8. Rom. vii. 14; viii. 2. [2] Sanderson.

to him. But Christians are God's property in a peculiar sense. They are his "purchased possession." Justice had doomed them to death, and they were bought off, "not by corruptible things as silver and gold, but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ." "Jesus gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them as a peculiar people."

As God purchased them to be his servants, so by the influence of his good Spirit he has qualified them for his service. Well may he say to each of them, "Remember, thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant;" and of them all as a body, "This people have I formed for myself; that they may show forth my praise." He has "shed his love abroad in their hearts;" he has "put his fear in their hearts." He has "put his law in their inward parts, and written it in their hearts." He has "created them anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," and "transformed them, by the renewing of their minds:" and, under the influence of his good Spirit, he has induced them gladly and gratefully to enter into his service, to assume his easy yoke, to take up his light burden. He has made them see and feel the irresistible force of his infinite excellence and kindness, as a motive to obedience. He has manifested to them "the great love wherewith he has loved them," and "blessed them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings;" so that they have been constrained to say, "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? Truly, O Lord, we are thy servants; we are thy servants; thou hast loosed our bonds." "Other lords have had dominion over us; henceforth we will make mention only of thy name." [1]

Finally, they are his servants, for they habitually employ themselves in his service. Christians knowing that "they are not their own, but bought with a price," glorify "with their souls, and with their bodies, which are God's," Him who has bought them. Influenced by his mercies, they present themselves to him as "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, which is their rational worship." Delivered by him from their former tyrants, "they serve him without fear, in righteousness and holiness, all the days of their life." They acknowledge that it is their duty, they know that it is their prevailing desire, to be entirely conformed to the will of their Lord: "Whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, they" would "do all to his glory." "Whatsoever they do in word or in deed, they would do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Their desire is, "to be in the world as Jehovah's elect servant was in the world, always about their Master's, their Father's, business; finding it their meat to do his will, and finish his work." [2]

It concerns us all seriously to inquire, if the condition which has been described be ours. Are we experimentally acquainted with

[1] Isa. xliv. 21; xliii. 21. Rom. v. 5. Jer. xxxii. 40; xxxi. 33. Eph. ii. 10. Rom. xii. 2. Eph. i. 2, 11, 4. Psal. cxvi. 12, 16. Isa. xxvi. 13.

[2] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Rom. xii. 1. Luke i. 74, 75. 1 Cor. x. 31. Col. iii. 17. 1 John iv. 17. John iv. 34.

this liberty of the children of God; are we the servants of God? The question should not be a difficult one to answer. On this subject, I believe, there may be a presumptuous confidence. Where there is not only no evidence for, but very much evidence against, a favorable answer, there are men "who speak great swelling words of vanity" about their christian liberty, while ther whole character and conduct proclaim them "servants of corruption." The only permanent satisfactory evidence that we are God's freemen is, habitual gratitude for our emancipation, showing itself in our "serving him without fear, in righteousness and holiness," "walking before him in love." The only permanent satisfactory evidence that we are God's servants is, our doing his work.

Owing to a variety of causes, there may be hesitation and doubt, where there is such evidence as ought to lay the foundation of humble confidence. But there is something wrong here also. Doubt on such a subject is, in no case, a good symptom, and it is obviously a matter of duty, no less than of prudence, to seek certainty on a point so vitally connected with our highest interests. If we are indeed "free," and "the servants of God," why, by remaining in doubt about it, deprive ourselves of the abundant consolation, the good hope, the varied and powerful motives to holiness, which a clear satisfactory persuasion of this truth would naturally produce? And if we are not "free," if we are not the servants of God, and if, continuing in this condition, our final perdition is absolutely certain, is it not at least equally important that we should be distinctly aware of it? We may, though now slaves, yet be emancipated; we may, though now the servants of sin, yet become the servants of God.

One cause why many men remain at ease in a state of unconversion is, the ill-founded hope that they have been converted, or, at any rate, the absence of a thorough conviction that they are yet unconverted. Let us honestly turn to account, for the purposes of self-inquiry, the plain truths brought forward in this discourse, and we must arrive at a conclusion respecting our true spiritual condition.

And should that conclusion prove an unfavorable one, as I am afraid might be the case with some now present, O, let them continue no longer in a state so degrading and dangerous! Brethren, you need not remain slaves. The ransom has been paid; the Deliverer stands ready to unloose your fetters; and if you continue unemancipated, it is because you will not avail yourselves of the atoning sacrifice, and the quickening Spirit of the Saviour. Think what the wages of your degrading servitude will be: "Death, the second death, everlasting destruction." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" "If ye sow to the flesh, ye shall of the flesh reap corruption." Consider, too, if you perish, you perish not unwarned; you have been told, most distinctly told, what must be the end of these things: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, by ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."[1] "Choose *now* whom

[1] Isa. lxv. 13–15.

ye will serve." There is surely no room for hesitation here: slavery and freedom; the slavery of Satan, the liberty of the children of God; the burning lake and the bottomless pit, and fulness of joy, rivers of pleasure, for evermore: these are the alternatives. There is no time for delay. "To-day if ye will hearken to his voice;" to-morrow you may be beyond its reach.

Should the conclusion prove a favorable one, as I trust it will in some, in many instances, O, how strong the obligation to distinguishing grace; how loud the calls to grateful acknowledgment; how powerful the motives to progressive holiness! "The more we attain unto the faculty of serving him cheerfully and diligently, the more still shall we find of this spiritual liberty, and have the more joy in it. Oh! that we could live as his servants, employing all our industry to do him service in the condition and place wherein he hath set us, whatsoever that is; and as faithful servants, more careful of his affairs than of our own, accounting it our main business to seek the advancement of his glory: 'Happy is the servant whom the Master, when he cometh, shall find so doing.'"[1]

II.—THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS.

I proceed now to the consideration of the view that is given us of the Christian's duty. His duty is generally to act conformably with his condition; to behave himself at once like a freeman and a servant,[2] while he guards against the abuse of the liberty wherewith he has been made free. He is to act "as free," yet taking care not to make his "liberty a cloak of maliciousness;" and he is to act as the "servant of God;" he is to use his freedom; he is not to abuse it; and he is to exemplify his condition as the servant of God. Let us attend to these three general views of the Christian's duty in succession.

§ 1.—*The Christian's duty to use his freedom; to act "as free."*

First, then, Christians are to act as free. Their conduct is to correspond with their condition as freemen, not slaves. The whole frame of their temper and behavior is to correspond to that liberty which is well called christian liberty, being purchased by the blood of Christ, that "blood of the covenant" by which "the prisoners of hope" are "sent forth out of the pit wherein is no water," revealed to us in the gospel of Christ, that "royal law," that "law of liberty," and conveyed to us, bestowed on us, by that "free Spirit" of Christ, who, wherever he comes, brings liberty along with him.[3] The best way of bringing out the truth on this subject, in a way in which it can be turned to practical purposes, will, I believe, be shortly to attend to the Christian's duty as to the maintenance and use of his freedom in the three aspects in which we have already contemplated it: freedom in reference to God; freedom in reference to man; freedom in reference to the powers and principles of evil.

[1] Leighton.

[2] Christianorum libertas est serva libertas, quia liberati sunt, ut Deo serviant; et libera servitus, quia non coacté sed sponte Deo et Magistratui obediunt.—GERHARD.

[3] Zech. ix. 11. James i. 25, 11, 8. Psal. li. 12.

(1.) *"As free" in reference to God.*

The Christian is to act "as free" in reference to God. When I say the Christian is to act as free, I refer to the actings, not only, nor principally, of the outer man, but of "the inner man" of the mind and heart. What is fundamental here is the maintenance of a firm faith of that christian truth, that truth as it is in Jesus, by which the Christian was freed both from the condition and dispositions of a slave, brought into the state and formed to the character of a freeman; and the cherishing of that humble, yet confident assurance, that he is in a state of favor with God, which naturally grows out of this faith, and its necessary effects on the character and conduct.

Many professors of Christianity seem to labor under a serious mistake on this subject. Uncertainty, doubt, perplexity, fear, seem to be the elementary principles of their religion; they seem to think the better of themselves that they have no "confidence towards God," no settled satisfaction respecting their highest interest; they appear to consider anxiety and alarm as the best proofs of spiritual life, the best motives to spiritual activity; and that the securest way of getting to heaven, is by no means to anticipate as certain, or even as very probable, the getting there at last, but to be "all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death," and what is to follow it. They seem to think that it would be presumption in any man to entertain that "good hope through grace" which the apostles cherished, and which they call on all Christians to cherish. This may have, as the apostle expresses it, "a show of humility;" but it exhibits a deplorable ignorance of the first principles of christian truth, an entire unacquaintance with the genius of the gospel economy.

There are, as we have already hinted, two things which a Christian should earnestly seek to hold steadfastly when he has obtained them, in order to his acting as a freeman towards God—"the assurance of faith," and "the assurance of hope." The first refers to the testimony of God respecting the Saviour and his salvation. No man is a Christian at all who has not both the faith and the hope of the gospel: and the measure of the holiness and the happiness of any individual Christian, is just the degree of this faith and hope, which are always proportioned to each other.

Surely there can be nothing good, there must be all that is evil, in doubting the testimony of God, that is, in treating the God of truth as if he were a liar. This is, properly speaking, unbelief: that which makes men slaves, and keeps them so; that which prevents men from coming to God, and leads them to depart from him. It is the truth which makes us free. It is only as believed that it can do so; it is only in the degree that it is believed that it can do so. Doubt with regard to the saving truth can never be right in any man; in a Christian it is doubly folly and sin, and is, indeed, as it were, spiritual suicide.

Doubt with respect to the safety of our own state, which is a very different matter from doubt of the saving truth, though the two things have intimate and interesting relations to each other, is in no case a desirable or even a proper state of mind. There may be but

too much ground for it, both on the part of the unconverted and of the converted man; but still it is a state which ought not to exist. As to the unconverted man, he ought not to be in *doubt* about his spiritual state; he ought to *know* his state to be one of deep guilt and imminent danger. While he only doubts that all is not right, he is not in the way of being saved. He must know that all is wrong. He must be brought to see himself lost, else he never will come to the Saviour; and if he were not wilfully blind, he could not help seeing that there is no room for doubt in his case. He is "condemned already, and the wrath of God is abiding on him." And there needs be no doubt about the matter; it is just as certain as the plain declaration of the God of truth can make it.

There may be ground for doubt as to the safety of his state in the case even of a converted man. Not that we believe that any really converted man shall not be saved. We are fully persuaded of the truth of that declaration of the faithful and true witness: "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of my Father's hand."[1] But if a converted man lose sight of the truth, which, in one view, is the great source, in another the only channel, of true holiness and comfort in the human heart, and losing sight of that truth, fall under the power of worldly lusts, and "lust having conceived, bringeth forth sin,"[2] then doubts about the safety of his spiritual state, if he is not sunk into utter stupidity or strong delusion, must prevail. But this is plainly a state into which the Christian ought not to have brought himself; and it is as plainly a state out of which the sooner he gets so much the better. Till he does, he can neither enjoy comfort nor make progress in holiness; and he can be brought out of it in no other way than by the truth which first made him free, again, through being anew apprehended in its meaning and evidence, exerting its natural influence, and thus, both directly and indirectly, furnishing his mind with satisfactory evidence that he is in a state of spiritual freedom.

This, then, is the first way, christian brethren, in which you are to act as free towards God. Hold fast the faith of "the truth as it is in Jesus." Continue to count it "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came to save sinners, even the chief." Reckon the Divine testimony, that "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses; seeing he hath made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,"[3] the very truth most sure. Seek the full assurance of faith respecting the Saviour's person and work, the fulness and freeness of his salvation. Keep always before your mind, as the great reality, God as holy love.

And then, in the second place, hold fast the hope of the gospel: cherish an undoubting expectation of "the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory." Never doubt but that God will do to you all that he has said. "Hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope," founded on the faith of the gospel, "steadfast to the end."

[1] John x. 28, 29. [2] James i. 15. [3] 1 Tim. i. 15. 2 Cor. v. 19, 21.

"Hold fast the beginning of your confidence," your first confidence, as sinners deserving hell, and never capable of deserving anything else, yet hoping for eternal life, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Give all diligence to the full assurance of this hope to the end."[1]

Then, under the influence of this faith and hope, engage with humble, joyful confidence in all the duties, both of interior and exterior religion. "In the full assurance of faith" that "we have a great High Priest, who for us hath entered into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," go "boldly to the throne of grace." "Trust in the Lord; pour out your heart before him." Make him your refuge; knowing his name, put your confidence in him, and say, "My expectation is from him. He is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved. For God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." "Be careful," anxious "for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your request known to God," in the assured expectation, that he will "supply your need according to his glorious riches," and make his "peace keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus." And "having confidence, full persuasion, respecting the entrance of Jesus, even the entrance of his flesh into the holiest, by blood, by which he has consecrated for us a new and living way into the holiest, draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and having your bodies washed with pure water, hold fast your profession." Pray to him, and "ask in faith, nothing wavering;" believing that, "if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, much more shall he give good things to them who ask him." Come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to him with psalms. Serve him with gladness; come before his presence with singing. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful to him, and bless his name." In the same spirit perform all the duties enjoined on you. Walk at liberty, keeping his commandments. Make it evident that you account his yoke an easy yoke, his burden a light burden. "Run in the way of his commandments," thus making it evident that he has "enlarged your hearts." And "count it all joy when you are brought into manifold trials." Do not suffer as one who must suffer, but as one who would suffer, since such is the will of God. "Be patient," "be joyful in tribulations," knowing they are not the punishment of the slave, but the chastisement of the child.

In fine, act as free in reference to God, by manifesting habitually a self-possessed, happy, contented mind. Let your whole demeanor speak the satisfaction you have in your privileges and hopes as freemen, the denizens of the New Jerusalem, "Jerusalem from above, which is free." Let your mien and gait be those of the children of a king. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."

Oh! how holy, how happy would Christians be, were they thus to rise above the influence of the spirit of bondage, the spirit of fear, and to yield themselves to the full influence of the spirit of adoption,

[1] Heb. ii. 6, 14; vi. 11. Psal lxii. 1, 2, 7, 8. Phil. iv. 6, 7, 19. Heb. x. 14–23.

teaching them habitually to cry, "Abba, Father!" How easy would be the most laborious duties, how light the heaviest afflictions, if, in obedience to the merciful injunction in the text, we would but think, and feel, and act, as freemen in reference to God![1]

(2.) *"As free" in reference to man.*

I proceed to remark, that the Christian should act "as free" in reference to man. He should allow the truth, respecting his freedom from human dominion in reference to faith and duty, to produce its proper effect, both in preventing him from subjecting his own mind and conscience to human authority, and from attempting to subject the mind and conscience of others to his authority, or to the authority of others to whom he may have incautiously yielded an undue deference.

The command of our Lord, in reference to the former of these manifestations of freedom is very explicit. "Be not ye the servants of men." "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled in any yoke of bondage." "Let no man spoil you."[2] The Christian does not act in character if he receive any doctrine, observe any ordinance, perform any duty, on any ground, except that he has seen with his own eyes, in what he knows to be a Divine revelation, that Christ has revealed the doctrine, appointed the institution, enjoined the duty. Christians obviously act at variance with their high calling, which is to liberty, when in deference to human authority, they receive doctrines which Christ has not revealed, observe ordinances which he has not instituted, and perform as a duty what he never made one, or what, it may be, he has forbidden as a sin. When a Christian is tempted to do any of these things, he is distinctly to say to those who would bring him into bondage, Who gave you authority over my conscience? Who authorized you to add to, to alter, or to repeal, any of Christ's ordinances? I have a Lord of the conscience, but it is not you; if I were your servant, I could not be His. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to obey men rather than God, judge ye."[3]

But Christians must not only refuse to submit to receive from men institutions, doctrines, and precepts, different from those authorized by Christ; but they must take care to receive Christ's institutions, doctrines, and laws on his own authority, and not on that of men. A man's creed may be in accordance with christian truth, and he may observe no ordinance but what Christ has appointed, and yet he may be a slave to human authority; for he receives the one and observes the other, not because he has, in the free exercise of his own mind, seen that they bear the stamp of Christ's authority, but because he has been taught them by his parents, or has found them in the writings of authors to whom he has been accustomed to yield great deference. Such a man, instead of being free from man, not only serves man, but

[1] Heb. iv. 14, 16; x. 22. Psal. lxii. 1, 2, 7, 8. Phil. iv. 6, 7. 19. Heb. x. 19–23. James i. 6. Matt. vii. 7. Psal. c. James i. 3. Rom. xii. 12. 2 Cor. vii. 4. Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4.

[2] 1 Cor. vii. 23. Gal. v. 1. Col. ii. 8.

[3] Acts iv. 19.

worships him. He puts him in the place of God or his Son, of the one Father or the one Master. It has been admirably said by one of the greatest ornaments of our denomination, "To yield up our judgment in religious matters to any individual, or to any church, is to invest that individual or that church with the attribute of infallibility; and consequently, while we retain the character of protestants, practically to adopt one of the worst errors of popery. You can have no certainty that any doctrine which you hold is true, unless you have seen it with your own eyes in the Scriptures. The faith, therefore, of those who submit to be guided by the sentiments of others, however learned, and wise, and holy, is downright presumption; a venture in the most important of all concerns upon the diligence, the impartiality, and the capacity of others, of which they can never be fully assured. Let them seriously consider, that although their creed may happen to be right, its orthodoxy will not recommend them to God; who perceives, in their undue respect for human authority, a criminal indifference to truth, and a virtual rejection of his authority, as the only foundation of faith." [1]

Or, to use the words of Bishop Sanderson,[2] one of the ablest divines of the English church of a former age: "Is it not blameworthy in us, and a proof of our carnality, to give up our judgments to be guided by the writings of Luther, or Calvin, or any other mortal man whatsoever? Worthy instruments they were, both of them, of God's glory, and such as did excellent service to the church in these times, whereof we yet find the benefit; and we are unthankful if we do not bless God for it: and, therefore, it is an unsavory thing for any man to gird at their names, whose memories should be precious. But yet, were they not men? Had they received the Spirit in the fulness of it, and not by measure? Knew they otherwise than in part, or prophesied otherwise than in part? Might they not in many things, and did they not in some things, mistake and err? Howsoever, the apostle's interrogatories are unanswerable. What saith he? 'Was Paul crucified for you; or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' Even so, was either Luther, or Calvin crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Luther or Calvin, or any other man, that any one of you should say, I am of Luther; or any other, I am of Calvin; and I of him, and I of him? What is Calvin or Luther, but 'ministers by whom ye believed;' that is to say, instruments, but not lords, of your belief?"

It is an important part, both of christian prudence and christian duty, to avoid all unnecessary dependence on, or obligation to, our fellow-men, as calculated to endanger our christian independence of mind and spirit. There may be entire inward freedom from man, amidst deep external dependence. But dependence is not of itself desirable, in reference to the higher objects of the christian life. Even to christian slaves the apostle says: "If thou mayest be free, use it rather." Christians should act on the ennobling principles and

[1] Dr. Dick.

[2] I gratefully confess myself indebted to the elaborate discourse from which this quotation is made for many good thoughts and pithy expressions; which are, however, so mixed up with my own thoughts and composition, as not to admit of particular acknowledgment.

precepts of their Lord: "It is more blessed to give than to receive:" "Owe no man anything, but to love one another;" "Be not the servants of men."

But Christians should act as free, not only in refusing to submit to human authority in religion themselves, but also in carefully abstaining from imposing the yoke of human authority on others. Their freedom should be manifested, not only in maintaining their own privileges as free, but in respecting the privileges of others. It is a curious inconsistency that not unfrequently occurs in human character, that men clamorous for, or jealous of, their own liberties, as they understand them, should yet be constantly invading the liberties of others. Unfond of being ruled, they are very fond of ruling. Wherever this is the case, the genuine spirit of liberty is wanting. Nowhere does this incongruity appear more monstrous than among professing Christians. An enlightened Christian distinctly perceives that his freedom from human authority is no peculiar privilege; he sees that it belongs equally to all Christians: nay, that it belongs equally to all men; and that, for religious opinions and usages, man is answerable to God only. He sees, that on this subject the privileges, the duty, and the responsibility of all men are substantially the same; and he acts on the principle, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them."[1] Holding, as he does, that man can confer no favor on man higher than the communication of just views of religious truth and duty, he is ready, by statement and argument, to endeavor to bring men to believe what he believes, because he accounts it truth; and to do what he does, because he accounts it duty; but he does not use any other means. He dares not use force; he dares not use bribes; he dares not use any influence but the influence of truth.

Where the difference of opinion involves, in his estimation, the essence of christian truth and duty, he of course must decline acknowledging as a Christian the individual who thus differs from him: but even here, though he may, though he must, think that that individual has not wisely, not rightly, exercised his undoubted right of judging for himself, he never thinks of denying that he has that right. He endeavors to think as favorably of him as circumstances will admit; recollects that he is not his judge; and rests satisfied, that He who is the final Judge, will, in this case, as in all others, do what is right.

Where the difference of opinion does not affect the essence of Christianity, he not only does not attempt to impose his opinion on his brother, but he does not allow the difference of opinion at all to influence his conduct to him as a christian brother. If he has evidence that Christ has received him, he receives him, and gives him all the liberty he himself claims; and does this, not as if he were granting him a boon, but merely as respecting that common christian liberty which Christ has given to all his disciples.

We have a beautiful instance of this mode of acting "as free" in the case of the apostle and the weak brethren, who made a distinction of meats and days. He would not allow them to impose their views on him. To any such attempt he gave the most strenuous opposition.

[1] Matt. vii. 12.

He would not submit to it; "no, not for an hour." But, though he knew they were in a mistake, he does not seek to impose his views on them. He was persuaded that they, as well as he, reverenced the authority of their common Lord; that they, who observed the day, observed it to the Lord, just as he to the Lord did not observe it. He recollected, that in every such case "every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind," that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and that "every one must give an account of HIMSELF to God;" and recognizing, in the common subjection of mind to the seen authority of Christ, a bond of union stronger than any cause of alienation or separation, in honest differences, as to what is the mind of the Lord on certain minor points, he received these weak brethren as Christ had received them; and while desirous to enlighten them, he was better pleased, till they were enlightened, that they should act according to their own conscientious views, though limited and incorrect, than according to his conscientious views, though wide and accurate. And he exhorted the two parties, which were then, as still, to be found in every christian society, the strong as well as the weak, to allow one another to walk at liberty; forbidding the weak to condemn the strong, which they were apt to do, and the strong to despise the weak, which they were just as apt to do; cautioning them both against hindering or "destroying the work of God" by their mutual contentions; forbidding them "to judge one another" in such cases, but calling on them "to judge this rather, that no one put a stumbling-block in his brother's way;" putting them in mind of the impropriety of "judging another man's servant;" suggesting the solemn thought, "every man must give an account of HIMSELF," not of his brother, "to God;" forbidding them to separate on such grounds, to dissolve the bonds either of Christian love or church fellowship; and commanding them, "so far as they have already attained, to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing;" assured, that this is the way to come to a closer agreement on subjects on which they conscientiously differed.[1] How happy would it have been for the church had Christians always acted thus, "as free;" treating each other as the Lord's freemen: not attempting to lord it over one another's consciences! And how often would the reader of ecclesiastical history have been spared the painful necessity of observing, in how many instances our Lord's saying has been verified, "Woe to the world because of offences!"

(3.) *"As free" in reference to the powers and principles of evil.*

It is now time that I remark, in the third place, that Christians should act "as free" in reference to the powers and principles of evil. In their contests with their spiritual enemies, whether these are the spirits of darkness, the influences of the present evil world, or the remaining sinful propensities of their fallen and but imperfectly renewed nature, they should think, and feel, and act, as freemen, and not as slaves. When an unconverted man, aroused by whatever means to a sense of his danger from these quarters, attempts something like op-

[1] Rom. xiv. *passim.*

position, he is as a man fighting in chains; his resistance is short, fitful, and feeble; the victory of his enemies certain, speedy, and complete. The issue of all such conflicts is confirmed slavery. And even the Christian, if he enter on the combat with these enemies under the influence of "the spirit of bondage," makes little head against them. But if, when assailed by his great enemy, he know and believe that the Captain of Salvation has vanquished him and his legions, and have entire confidence in the promise, that "Satan shall be bruised under his feet shortly," [1]—if like a freeman, who, though once the prey of the mighty, has been rescued out of his grasp, who, though once his captive, now walks at liberty, he take to him the "shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," he is sure of victory. This is "the whole armor of God," and clothed in this panoply, and wielding these weapons, he resists the devil, so that he flees from him. It is thus that he is able to "quench all his fiery darts," and to "turn to flight the armies of the aliens." Conscious of the value of freedom, carefully guarding himself from being entangled in Satan's snares, or led captive of him at his will, and acquitting himself like a good soldier of Christ Jesus,

> "————There's not a chain,
> That hellish foes confed'rate for his harm,
> Can wind around him, but he casts it off
> With as much ease as Samson his green wyths." [2]

In reference to the evil influences of the present world, things seen and temporal, let the Christian act as free, and show that he has been "delivered from the present evil world" by Christ giving himself for him; that by the cross of Christ, the world, which once, as a mighty monarch, swayed resistless power over him, is now crucified to him, a powerless, contemptible, accursed thing. Let him show that he feels that he is become free of the universe, and for eternity, by becoming the child of the Lord of the universe, who liveth forever and ever; and that the vain, unreal, shadowy hopes and fears of this narrow, short-lived scene, are no longer to be the great moving principles of his conduct. Let him act as if the world, so far as it is fitted to promote his welfare, instead of being his master, were a part of his property. He is not the world's, the world is his; he is an inheritor of the world; and considered as it often is in Scripture, as an enemy, let him show that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." [3]

As to the propensities of his fallen and imperfectly renewed nature, so far as they are depraved, let them treat them as vanquished enemies, despoiled of their dominion, concerning whom the sentence has gone forth, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Let him consider them as, like the Canaanites of old, doomed to utter destruction: "let not his eye pity, nor his hand spare." Let him "mortify his members that are on the earth," "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," "resolutely cut off the offending right hand, pluck out the offending right eye," and cast them from him as an abomina-

[1] Rom. xvi. 20. [2] Cowper. [3] 1 John v. 4.

ble thing. And so far as they are an original part of his nature, not to be extirpated but improved, let him remember that now he is not their servant; they are his; and let him use them as the efficient instruments of promoting the glory of his great deliverer. The best illustration of this part of the subject that is anywhere to be met with, is to be found in the 6th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness: but yield yourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace. God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which has been delivered to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. As then ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." [1]

So much for the illustration of the first part of the general view of the Christian's duty. He ought to act in a correspondence to his state of liberty, "as free" in reference to God, in reference to men, in reference to the powers and principles of evil.

Many of the inducements which should influence the Christian to act "as free," to maintain and assert his christian liberty, have come before our minds in the course of our illustration of this duty. It may serve a good purpose, however, to glance at a few more before concluding this part of the discussion.

You cannot, my christian brethren, neglect compliance with this injunction, 'Be "as free;" act in accordance with your condition as a condition of liberty,'—without obvious injustice to Him whom you acknowledge as your only Lord. You are His. He has bought you from slavery to liberty. When you act as free, you use his property in the way he wishes it to be used. But when you act otherwise, when you serve men, or the devil, or the world, or the flesh, you abuse his property; you dishonestly employ it for a purpose different from, opposite to, that for which he intended, to which he had destined it. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." "Be not then the servants of men:" be not the servants of Satan: be not the servants of divers lusts and pleasures.

[1] Rom. vi. 11–23.

But not only will you do injustice to Christ, you will do foul dishonor to God, if you do not act "as free." You will allow something else to occupy his place. He must be dishonored, whoever or whatever is put in his room. But when you serve Mammon, serve your own belly, serve Satan, the worst of all beings, while you ought to "worship the Lord your God, and serve only HIM," O how deeply do you dishonor him!

Nor do you dishonor God only, you dishonor yourselves. You do not "walk worthy" of the privileges which have been conferred on you. "Ye know," or at least ye ought to know, "your calling, brethren." It is "a high and holy one." "You have been called into liberty." If you are servants, you are servants only of Him, whom to serve is the greatest honor which the most exalted creature can enjoy. It is immeasurable degradation for you to become the servants of men or devils, or worldly lusts and sinful passions.

Nor is there only degradation in it; there is fatiguing, profitless labor. Christ's yoke is an easy yoke; Christ's burden is a light burden. "His commandments are not grievous."[1] O how much is it otherwise with the yoke, and burdens, and commandments of his rivals! "They who follow lying vanities, forsake their own mercies." Every Christian who has made the experiment (and, alas! every Christian has made the experiment but too often), knows, like the Israelites of old, "the difference between Jehovah's service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."[2] As you would not, then, rob the Lord who bought you, as you would not dishonor God, and disgrace yourselves, and wear yourselves out with fruitless fatigues and thankless labor, "walk at liberty, keeping his precepts;" "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled with any yoke of bondage."

Well may Christians triumph in, and be jealous of, this glorious liberty; for as Luther, with his usual power, says—"Christ's truth maketh us free, not civilly, nor carnally, but divinely. We are made free in such sort, that our conscience is free and quiet, not fearing the wrath of God to come. This is the true and inestimable liberty, to the excellency and majesty of which, if we compare the other, they are but as one drop of water in respect of the ocean. For who is able to express what a thing it is, when a man is assured in his heart that God neither is, nor ever will be, angry with him, but will be forever a merciful and loving Father to him for Christ's sake! This is, indeed, a marvellous and incomprehensible liberty, to have the Most High Sovereign Majesty so favorable to us, that he doth not only defend, maintain, and succor us, in this life; but also, as touching our bodies, will so deliver us, as that, though sown in corruption, dishonor, and infirmity, they shall rise again in incorruption, and glory, and power. This is an inestimable liberty, that we are made free from the wrath of God forever; and is greater, more valuable, than heaven and earth, and the created universe. 'Blessed is the man who is in such a case; yea, blessed is the man whose God is the Lord.'"

[1] 1 John v. 3. [2] 2 Chron. xii. 8.

§ 2.—*The Christian's duty to guard against the abuse of his freedom.*

I proceed now to the consideration of the second department of the Christian's duty, as here delineated. He is to guard against misapprehending and misimproving his condition as free. He is to be careful, while using, not to abuse his liberty. He is not to use his liberty "as a cloak of maliciousness;" or, as the Apostle Paul has it in his Epistle to the Galatians, "he is not to use his liberty for an occasion to the flesh." [1] The first thing to be done here, is distinctly to apprehend the meaning of the terms in which this department of christian duty is described. What are we to understand by "maliciousness?" what by "a cloak of maliciousness?" and what by "using our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness?"

The Greek word translated "maliciousness" [2] here, and "malice" in the first verse of this chapter, like the English words by which it is rendered, is often, when used along with other words descriptive of particular vices, such as anger, envy, covetousness, employed to describe that special vicious temper, and its manifestations, which is directly opposed to brotherly love and charity, so as to be equivalent to ill-will, malignity; but when standing by itself, as in the case before us, it seems ordinarily employed as a general name for sinful dispositions and actions, as equivalent to sin or wickedness. Thus, when Simon Magus is called on to repent of his profane and wicked proposal, to purchase miraculous power by money, he is called on to "repent of his wickedness," [3] that is, his sin; and Christians are called on to be "in malice," rather "in wickedness," in sinful disposition and habit in all their forms, children; while they are "in understanding, men." [4] "Maliciousness" is here just equivalent to sin, of whatever kind; and the injunction seems quite parallel with that from the Epistle to the Galatians, just quoted, "Use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh;" a general name for the depraved principles of fallen humanity, or for human nature as depraved.

But what are we to understand by "a cloak of wickedness?" The word rendered cloak,[5] which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, signifies a covering of any kind. It is the word employed in the Greek version of the Old Testament to denote the covering of badgers' skins which was spread over the tabernacle.[6] It is here obviously used figuratively. A cloak of wickedness is something by which we attempt to conceal, from ourselves or others, the true character of some vicious disposition or action; an excuse, a pretext, an apology for wickedness. To cloak sin is to disguise wickedness. Our Lord says, that the Jews, who had heard his discourses and seen his miracles, had "no cloak" (not the same word as here, but a word of similar import); that is, were deprived of every pretext, excuse, or apology "for their sin," in rejecting him.[7] Josephus says, Joab had a plausible pretext for killing Abner, but he had no such cloak for the murder of Amasa. Men often attempt to conceal from others, and even from themselves, the true character of favorite vicious propen-

[1] Gal. v. 13. [2] Κακία. [3] Acts viii. 22. [4] 1 Cor. xiv. 20.
[5] Ἐπικάλυμμα. [6] Exod. xxvi. 14. [7] Πρόφασιν.—John xv. 22.

sities and profitable sinful practices. Saul disobeyed God in not entirely destroying the property of the Amalekites; and he attempted to cloak his disobedience under the pretext of his being desirous of presenting a fit sacrifice to Jehovah.[1] Jezebel cloaked her murderous revenge against Naboth, under the pretext of zeal against blasphemy.[2] Economy is made the cloak of avarice; generosity, of extravagance; caution, of indolence; religious zeal, of personal resentment. And here the apostle cautions Christians against cloaking wickedness under the pretext of liberty, against indulging any sinful temper, engaging in any sinful pursuit, under the mistaken impression, or the hypocritical pretence, that these were but the exercise of that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. The general meaning, then, of the injunction, "use not your liberty as a cloak of wickedness," is thus sufficiently apparent. It may serve, however, a good purpose, to show how we ought to guard against such an abuse of our Christian liberty, in the three different aspects in which we have been led to contemplate it: our liberty in reference to God; our liberty in reference to men; our liberty in reference to the powers and principles of evil.

(1.) *Cautions respecting abuses of liberty in reference to God.*

First, Christians must not use their liberty with respect to God as a cloak of wickedness. Those men do so, who, under the pretext that they are free in reference to God, consider themselves as released from obligation to make his law the rule of their conduct. The doctrine of the gospel undoubtedly is, that Christians are not subject to the Mosaic law; that nothing is obligatory on a Christian's conscience merely because it is contained in the law of Moses; and that the system of Divine administration, under which they are placed in consequence of their connection with Christ, is not a system of mere law under which the rule is, "Do and live"—"He that doeth them, shall live in them," and no provision is made for the pardon of any offence; but a system of grace, under which, not only is a full and free pardon bestowed on every believer, and eternal life promised as a free gift through Jesus Christ our Lord; but "if any man," after believing, "sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, whose blood cleanseth from all sin;" and if any man who has sinned, availing himself of this Divine arrangement, "confess his sins, God is faithful and just to forgive him his sins, and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness."[3] The apostolic statements embodying these principles, such as, that Christians are "dead to the law by the body of Christ;" that they are "delivered from the law, that being dead wherein they were held;" that "there is no condemnation to them;" that "Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth;" that they are "not under the law, but grace;" that "Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law, having become a curse for them;" that they "through the law are dead to the law;" that "they who are led by the Spirit are not under

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 15. [2] 1 Kings xxi. 10. [3] 1 John i. 9.

the law;"[1]—were liable to misapprehension and abuse, and have, in all ages, been misapprehended and abused.

The enemies of apostolical Christianity grounded on these statements one of their strongest objections against it,—that it was a system that sapped the foundation of all religious and moral obligation; and not a few who professed to embrace the gospel, while they did not understand it, actually turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and the liberty which is in Christ into profane licentiousness: saying, and acting out the impious saying, let us "continue in sin, because grace does abound."[2] And this we may remark, by the way, is one of the proofs which we have, that what we call evangelical Christianity is indeed substantially apostolical Christianity; that we find the same objection urged against its principles by its opposers, and the same abuse made of them by men of corrupt minds who profess to embrace them. The system which many men would impose on us as Christianity, giving no occasion for such misrepresentation and abuse, distinctly thus disproves its identity with the Christianity of the New Testament.

This abuse has assumed various forms. Sometimes it has taken the form of this assertion: 'We are free from the law. "Where there is no law, there is no transgression." What may be sin to other men is no sin to us. "There is no condemnation to us." God sees no sin in us.' At other times it has embodied itself in the assertion: '"The Spirit dwells in us." We walk according to the Spirit. They who want the Spirit may need the law; but we are a law to ourselves. We need only to follow the Spirit, and we are sure all will be right. The law is not for righteous men like us. We do not require the law as a guide to our conduct.' But, whatever form it assumes, this is its general character; it is using Christian liberty as a cloak for wickedness.

It requires very little consideration to perceive that this is a gross abuse of the doctrine of Christian liberty. We have seen that the Christian's liberty, in reference to God, consists chiefly in two things —deliverance from the condemning sentence of the law, which we have violated, and the curse which we have incurred; and deliverance from a slavish temper in reference to God and his law. No human ingenuity will ever be able to show that either, or both of these, imply a release from an obligation to conform ourselves to the will of God, as made known to us in his law. On the contrary, both are necessary, in order to our yielding an enlightened, cheerful, and therefore acceptable, obedience to that law; both are intended to produce this blessed result; and in every case where these two species of liberty are really enjoyed, they actually produce it, in the degree in which they are enjoyed.

Indeed, a release from obligation to obey the Divine law is, in the nature of things, impossible, except on one or other of the following suppositions,—that God ceases to be what he is, an absolutely perfect being; or that man ceases to be what he is, a rational being: for the law is nothing else but an expression of the duties which arise out of the relations which subsist between God as the absolutely perfect

[1] Rom. vii. 4, 6; viii. 1; x. 4; vi. 15. Gal. iii. 13; ii. 19; v. 18. [2] Rom. vi. 1.

being, and man as his rational creature. Were God to become unwise, unholy, unjust, unmerciful, his law might, must, change : were man to sink into the state of an idiot or a brute, he would cease to be the subject of the Divine law :—on no other supposition can man's obligation to the Divine law be altered or destroyed.[1]

Were the thing possible, it would be the most dreadful calamity which could befall him in reference to whom it took place ; for the law of God is just a statement of the direct and only way to improvement and happiness. The person released from an obligation to regulate himself by it, is a person at liberty to make himself and others as miserable as the caprices of his humor may suggest, or the extent of his power permit. And what sort of a world would it be if all men, or any large portion of men, were as fully relieved from responsibility, and the sense of responsibility, as idiots or madmen are ; if selfishness, unchecked by remorse or religious fear, were permitted to guide and direct the activities of men possessed of reason ?[2]

The truth on this subject has been so well stated by an old divine, that I offer no apology for making a considerable citation from his writings :—" Not to wade far into a controversy, in which many have drowned their reason and their faith, it shall suffice to propound one distinction, which, if well heeded and rightly applied, will clear the whole point concerning the abrogation and obligation of the moral law under the New Testament, and cut off many needless curiosities which lead men into error. The law, then, may be considered either as a rule or as a covenant. Christ hath freed all believers from the rigor and curse of the law considered as a covenant, but he hath not freed them from obedience to the law considered as a rule ; and all those Scriptures that speak of the law as if it were abrogated or annulled, speak of it considered as a covenant. Those again that speak of the law as if it were still in force, take it considered as a rule. The law as a covenant is rigorous, and under that rigor we are not, if we be in Christ ; but the law as a rule is equal, and under that equity we still are, though we be in Christ. The law as a rule only showeth us what is good and evil, what we are to do, and what we are not to do ('He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee'), without any condition annexed, either of reward if we observe it, or of punishment if we transgress it. But the law as a covenant exacteth perfect, punctual, and personal performance of everything that is contained therein, with a condition annexed of God's acceptance and blessing if we perform it to the full, but of his wrath and curse on us if we fail in anything. Such was the law under which man was originally placed. But 'by reason of transgression, we having all broken that covenant, the law hath its work upon us ;' it worketh wrath, it produceth punishment, and involves us all in the curse ; so that by the covenant of the law 'no flesh living can be justified.' Then cometh in Christ, who, subjecting himself for our sakes to the covenant of the law, first fulfilleth it in his own person, but in our behalf, as our surety, and then disannulleth

[1] " *Without* law, or altogether *above* the law, man can never be, for the law is the expression of the divine essence itself."—OLSHAUSEN.

[2] See note C.

it; and instead thereof establisheth a better covenant, even the covenant of grace; so that now as many as believe are free from the covenant of the law, and from the curse of the law, and set under a covenant of grace, and under promises of grace.

"There is a translation, then, of the covenant; but what is all this to the rule? That still is where it was; even as the nature of good and evil is still the same as it was. And the law considered as a rule, can no more be abolished or changed than can the nature of good and evil be abolished or changed. It is our singular comfort, then, and the happiest part of our Christian liberty, that we are freed by Christ, and through faith in him, from the covenant and the curse of the law; but we must know that it is our privilege to remain subject to the law as a rule." God grants his law graciously; and "our duty, notwithstanding the liberty we have in Christ, is to frame our lives and conversation according to the rule of the law, which, if we shall neglect under the pretence of our christian liberty, we must answer for both—both for neglect of our duty, and abusing our liberty." [1] We Christians are "not without law to God;" we are "under the law to Christ."

No man who really enjoys the liberty of the children of God, can abuse it as a cloak for wickedness; for in his mind, freedom from the yoke of sin is indissolubly connected with submission to the authority of God. But in every age of the church there have been bold, bad men, who have indulged unholy, Antinomian speculations, and, given up to strong delusions, have supposed themselves free while the slaves of sin—men,

> "That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
> And still revolt when truth would set them free;—
> License they mean when they cry liberty." [2]

Such were the men whom the apostle in his second epistle describes as "speaking great swelling words of vanity, and alluring, through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those who were clean escaped from them who live in error;" and of whom he says, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage." [3] Such men, too, were those of whom Luther complains, "Men who would be accounted good Christians merely because they rejected the authority of the Pope; who will do nothing that either the magistrate or God would have them to do; remaining in their old, disorderly nature, however much they may make their boast of the gospel;" and who, as Calvin says, "reckoned it a great part of christian liberty that they might eat flesh on Fridays."

There have been men, too, of a better sort, who, from a fondness for paradox and singularity, have adopted Antinomian language, while the saving truth, which is sanctifying truth, substantially held by them, preserved them in a great measure from corresponding dispositions and conduct. It is, however, of high importance, that on this, and indeed on every subject, we should learn to "speak the things

[1] Sanderson. [2] Milton. [3] 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19.

that become sound doctrine," that we employ "sound speech that cannot be condemned." [1] And though happily in this country Antinomian tenets are in a great measure unknown, let every Christian remember that there are Antinomian tendencies in every human heart, so far as it is unrenewed; and let him set himself to watch, to check, to mortify all such tendencies in his own heart; and when the thought occurs, "may we not continue in sin, that grace may abound?" let him meet it with the apostle's strong disclaimer, "God forbid! how shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" [2] Or by the plain common sense reflection, 'it would be a strange way for a man to prove himself a freeman by voluntarily becoming a slave to his worst enemy.'

(2.) *Cautions respecting the abuse of their liberty in reference to man.*

I remark, in the second place, that Christians must not use their liberty with respect to man as a cloak of wickedness. Christians may do this principally in two ways:—by an unsober and an uncharitable use of christian liberty; and by neglecting what is duty, and committing what is sin, under mistaken apprehensions of, or false pretences in reference to, christian liberty.

Everything that is lawful in itself is not always expedient or proper in the circumstances in which we are placed. When it becomes inexpedient in my circumstances, it becomes unlawful for me. The Christian, who acts on the principle that everything that is lawful in itself may be done at all times, and in all circumstances, will often make his liberty a cloak of wickedness. My doing what, considered in itself, my conscience—it may be well informed—would not prevent me from doing, but by no means requires me to do, in circumstances in which I have reason to believe that it may prove a snare to myself, or that it will give offence in the New Testament sense of the word, that is, throw a stumbling-block in the way of a worse-informed brother, is a violation of the injunction which we are now considering. A Christian must never do what is unlawful, but it may sometimes be his duty to refrain from doing what is lawful. It has been justly remarked, that "scarce is there any one thing wherein the devil putteth a slur upon us more frequently, yea and more dangerously too (because unsuspected by us), than in making us to take the uttermost of our freedom in indifferent things. It, therefore, concerneth us so much the more to keep a sober watch over ourselves and our souls in the use of God's good creatures, lest, even under the fair title and habit of christian liberty, we yield ourselves up to a carnal licentiousness, or to a criminal uncharitableness." [3]

There never was a Christian more fully conscious of his liberty than the Apostle Paul, more sensible of its value, and more determined in maintaining it. Yet observe what he says on this subject: "Let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything

[1] Tit. ii. 1, 8 [2] Rom. vi. 2. [3] Sanderson.

to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil to that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. We then who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for good to edification. Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them who are weak."[1] The rule in reference to matters which conscience permits, but does not enjoin, is, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. Please all men in all things, seeking not your own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."[2]

Happy is the Christian who, like Paul, knowing and feeling that he is free from all, and determined not to be brought under the power of any, yet, like him, thus becomes the servant of all, that by all means he may save some. It was an excellent saying of Luther's: "Be free in everything by faith. Be a servant in everything by charity." We should know and be fully persuaded with the persuasion of faith, that all things are lawful; and yet we should purpose, and be fully resolved, for charity's sake, to forbear the use of many things, if we find them inexpedient. He that will have his own way in everything, in itself indifferent, whosoever may take offence at it, makes his liberty but a cloak of wickedness by using it uncharitably.

But there is still a worse mode of using our liberty in reference to man as a cloak of wickedness. Christian liberty has not unfrequently been made a cloak of wickedness, by being pleaded as a reason for transgressing the laws, neglecting the duties, and disturbing the order of civil and domestic society. No man is the less, but rather the more, bound, in consequence of his being a Christian, to observe all the laws that regulate his civil and domestic relations, that are not inconsistent with the law of God. Nay, he whose free servant the Christian is, has commanded him to serve HIM in serving those who, by the arrangements of his providence, are his superiors. In everything that is not inconsistent with my duty to God, I, as a Christian, am bound to be "subject to the powers that be;" to "obey magistrates;" to "submit to every human institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well;" for this is the law of my Master in heaven. With the same exception, a christian wife is bound to be "subject to her own husband; a christian child to his parents; a christian servant to his master; though in all these cases the civil or domestic superior should not be a Christian. My liberty as a Christian does not in the slightest degree relax the obligation of

[1] Rom. xiv. 13; xv. 1. [2] 1 Cor. x. 32, 33.

my civil or domestic obligations; and therefore, whenever the latter are violated under a pretence of the former, liberty is used as a cloak of wickedness. Christians should manifest their liberty in this matter, not by neglecting or violating civil and domestic duties, but by the cheerfulness with which they perform them, showing that here, as in every other department of christian duty, 'they serve God without fear,' they 'walk at liberty, keeping his commandments.'"

The honor of Christianity is very much concerned in Christians avoiding every approach to thus making their liberty a cloak of wickedness. This is very obvious from the language of the apostle: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke," that is, as are slaves, "count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren (because, as Christians, the servant and the master are on the same level); but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. If any teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds; from such withdraw thyself." "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; that ye may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."[1] Our text, viewed in its connection, seems plainly to have a peculiar reference to the abuse of christian liberty as an excuse for disobedience to civil rulers, exercising a malignant influence on the character and cause of Christianity. "Submit yourselves to every human institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well; for *so*" in this way "it is the will of God, that ye with well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of wickedness."

(3.) *Cautions respecting the abuse of their liberty in reference to the powers and principles of evil.*

It only remains, on this part of the subject, that I remark, in the third place, that Christians must not use their liberty in reference to the powers and principles of evil as a cloak of wickedness. Christians must not say, 'because we are delivered from the wicked one, therefore we may, without sin or danger, put ourselves in the way of his temptations: there is no need that we watch against his wiles, or resist his attacks.' This were to use their liberty as a cloak of wickedness. On the contrary, they are carefully to avoid whatever may naturally lead to a partial recovery of their enemy's power, and a corresponding loss of their freedom. When they find that anything, however innocent in itself, through his craft and their remaining depravity, becomes a temptation to sin, they ought to abandon it. "Better it is by voluntary abstinence to part with some of our liberty as to God's creatures, than by voluntary transgression to become the

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 1–5. Tit. ii. 9, 10.

devil's captives."[1] Their duty is distinctly stated by the apostle in these striking words, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take to yourselves the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." "Be sober, be vigilant; because your enemy the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith."[2]

Christians must not say, 'because we have obtained emancipation from sin that dwells in us, because we know, and are sure, that this enemy shall not have dominion over us; for we are not under law, but under grace; therefore we need not be constantly engaged in an active warfare with conquered foes.' This is an obvious abuse of christian liberty. The true use of christian liberty in this respect is pointed out by the apostle in such passages as the following, which, though already quoted, we think it well to repeat: "Reckon ye yourselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ," *i. e.*, reckon yourselves spiritually free. What then? Have you nothing to do but to sit down and enjoy your freedom? No. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."[3] "We are risen with Christ," says the apostle. That is another figurative view of our spiritual freedom. Well, then, have we nothing to do but to congratulate ourselves on our felicity, and indolently enjoy it? Ah! no. "Since ye are risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Seek the things that are above, and heavenly. Mortify your members which are on the earth. Put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man with his deeds."[4]

The grace of God towards his people, whom he has made free, is not expressed by placing them in a condition where no enemy can assail them; but in enabling them to make such a use of the liberty and power he has given them, as that, feeble though they be in themselves, they become "more than conquerors through him who loved them." If we would "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free," we must be constantly on the alert against "those who would again bring us into bondage." It is a good saying of the

[1] Sanderson.
[2] Eph. vi. 11–18. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.
[3] Rom. vi. 11–14.
[4] Col. iii. 1–5.

judicious Hooker: "It was not the meaning of our Lord and Saviour, in saying, 'Father, keep them in thy name,' that we should be careless in keeping ourselves. To our own safety our own sedulity is required." And we must never bring into antagonism God's promises and his commands, our privileges and our duties. His promise enforces, not repeals, his law. Our privileges encourage and strengthen for duty: but by no means annul the obligation, or diminish the importance of obedience.

§ 3.—*The Christian's duty to act out his character "as the servant of God."*

We proceed now to the consideration of the third view of the Christian's duty, as correspoding to his condition. As in accordance to his condition as a condition of liberty, he is to act as free; so in accordance with his condition as a condition of subjection, he is to act "as a servant of God."

Obedience, active and passive subjection to the will of God, as made known in his word, and in his providential dispensations, forms the comprehensive duty of the Christian, as the servant of God. What lies at the foundation here, is a just apprehension, and an habitual contemplation of those truths in reference to the character of God, and to our relation to him, which form the ground of our obligation to serve him, and a perception of which is necessary to our feeling this obligation. He who would act as a servant of God, must keep before his mind the infinite wisdom and righteousness of God, which make it absolutely impossible that either in the injunctions of his law, or in the dispensations of his providence, there should be anything unwise or unjust; he must keep before his mind the infinite benignity of God, which secures that "in keeping," and for keeping, "his commandments, there shall be a great reward," that "all his paths, to them who keep his covenant, shall be mercy," as well as truth, and that "all things shall work together for good to them who love him;" he must keep before his mind the infinite power of God, by which he is able to carry fully into effect all the promises, however exceeding great and precious, which he has made to obedience, and all the threatenings, however dreadful, which he has uttered against disobedience; he must keep before his mind the infinite faithfulness of God, which makes it impossible that he should deny himself, and secures that, "though heaven and earth should pass away, not one iota or tittle shall pass," either from his promises or his threatenings, "till all be fulfilled."[1]

The Christian must not only keep habitually before his mind those perfections of his Divine Master which are displayed in his word and providence, but also the relations he bears to this infinitely great, and excellent, and benignant being. He must remember that he is His creature, and his NEW creature; that all that he is that is good, is the work of his hand; that all that he has that is valuable, is the gift of his common bounty, or of his sovereign grace; that both himself and all that he possesses is His property, in a far higher sense than any-

[1] Psal. xix. 11; xxv. 10. Rom. viii. 28. Matt. v. 18.

thing can be the property of any creature; and that to alienate them from the purpose for which he designed them, to employ them in a way different from, opposite to, that in which he has commanded them to be employed, is a crime, of which the basest fraud which can be committed by one fellow-creature on another, in whatever mutual relation they may stand, is but an imperfect shadow. It is this setting and keeping the Lord always before us in his essential excellencies, and in his revealed relations, that forms the mind to those sentiments of supreme veneration, esteem, confidence, and love towards God, to that habitual sense of entire dependence on him, and of infinite obligation to him, which are necessary to lead us to "serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear;" and, at the same time, to serve him without "the fear that has torment," "in righteousness and holiness, all the days of our lives."

Next in importance to our thus cultivating the principle of obedience, is our making ourselves acquainted with the rule of obedience. He who would act as the servant of God, must "not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." And in order to this, he must study the word of God, he must observe the providence of God, and he must seek the guidance of the Spirit of God. He must make himself well acquainted with those "scriptures given by inspiration of God, which are profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness, and by which the servant of God may be made perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." He must let this word "dwell in him richly, in all wisdom," that in all the variety of circumstances in which he may be placed, he may know what God would have him to do. He must make the Divine precepts the men of his counsel, and take them as "a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path." [1] There is no doing a master's will without knowing it.

In order to know our Divine Master's will, we must consider the operation of his hand, as well as attend to the declarations of his mouth; we must study the Divine providence, in order to enable us wisely to apply the instructions of the Divine word; we must learn to "hear the *rod*" as well as the *word:* and under a deep sense of our spiritual blindness, our tendency to overlook, and misapprehend, very plain intimations of the Divine will both in his word and in his providence, and of our indisposition to comply with his will, even when we cannot help perceiving it; we must seek the good Spirit, who is promised to enlighten our darkness, and to rectify our obliquities. Believing that if any man lack wisdom, the knowledge of God's will, he should ask it of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraids not, we should in faith, nothing doubting, in the full assurance of faith, present these prayers: "Open mine eyes, that I may behold wonders out of thy law. Put thy Spirit within me. Write thy law on my heart; put it in my inward part. Hide not thy commandments from me. Teach me the way of thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. Order my steps in thy word."

Thus cultivating the principle of obedience, and studying the rule of obedience, Christians are to act as the servants of God, by exer-

[1] Eph. v. 17. 2 Tim. iii. 16. Col. iii. 16. Psal. cxix. 105.

cising the principle, and applying the rule in actual obedience, both active and passive. They are to regulate the whole outer and inner man, according to the Divine will. They are to "serve him in their bodies and in their spirits, which are his."

They are to "serve him with their spirits," believing, willing, loving, choosing, fearing, hoping, *according to his word.* Those high things within, which no human, no created power can control, must be entirely subjected to the Divine authority. When a Christian is acting in character as a servant of God, the answer to the question, Why do you account that true? is, God has said so; Why do you account that false? God has said so; Why do you will this? God has said it is right; Why do you choose that? God has said that it is good; Why do you fear that? God has interposed a prohibition or uttered a threatening respecting it; Who do you hope for that? God has promised it.

This internal obedience must be manifested in external obedience. The language of our conduct must be, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey:" we must "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly." We must serve him in the various appointed institutions of secret and public religion; "entering into our closets, shutting our doors on us, praying to our Father, who seeth in secret:" "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," but "walking in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless;" and such of us as have families, saying with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." But we must not suppose that it is only when we engage in strictly religious services that we are to act as the servants of God. His law of justice, truth, and love, is to regulate all our transactions with our fellow-men, and in performing our various relative duties, as superiors, inferiors, or equals, we are to do all "as to the Lord."

Our obedience to God as his servants, is to be passive as well as active. It has been justly said, that obedience consists in the subjecting of a man's own will to the will of another. If that subjection be in something to be done, it is active obedience: if it be in something to be suffered, it is passive obedience. Now, as God's servants, we must not only do but suffer his will. And we must show our passive obedience, by being contented with his allotments, and by being submissive to his chastisements. It is meet that the servant of so great, and wise, and good a Master, should be satisfied with the place in the family he assigns him, with the kind and degree of work he allots him, with the kind and measure of food, support, and wages he gives him. We are not acting like the servants of God, when we grudge and murmur at his appointments, and envy those to whom he may have assigned a higher place, and more abundant accommodations. In such a case, we ought to say, "Should it be altogether according to my mind?" "Has he not a right to do what he wills with his own?" It is not for God's servant to choose out the lot of his inheritance. It is in better hands. We must never say, never think that he is a hard Master. "Having food and raiment," however scanty and coarse, we should "be content;" "content with present things." We should learn of that old and experienced servant of God, the

apostle Paul, what the good Spirit had taught him: "In whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content." Our passive obedience as God's servants is to be shown in our patience as well as in our contentment. What servant is there whom the great Master does not require to chasten? "He does not afflict willingly." It is always for our fault; such is his justice; and such is his goodness, it is always for our profit. We certainly do not act like well-informed and well-dispositioned servants, if we do not take patiently, cheerfully, thankfully, those afflictions which we deserve, which we need, and which the great Master not only means for our good, but will make effectual for the purpose for which he intends them, the making us "partakers of his holiness." Such is a hasty sketch of that obedience which, as servants of God, Christians owe to their Divine Master.

It may serve a good purpose to notice some of the characteristic marks by which the obedience of Christians, as servants of God, ought to be, and indeed is, distinguished from what is not unfrequently mistaken for it.[1] There are, particularly, four characteristics to which I wish to turn your attention. In order to act as the servant of God, the Christian's obedience must be implicit, impartial, cheerful, and persevering. Let me say a word or two in illustration of each of these. If we would act as servants of God, our obedience must be implicit. We must do what God bids us do, because God bids us do it. There are many who do many things which God commands, who never obey God. The doing what God commands may be agreeable to my inclination, or conducive to my interest; and if, on these grounds, I do it, I serve myself, not God. What God commands may be commanded by those whose authority I acknowledge, and whose favor I wish to secure; if I do it on these grounds, I am man's servant, not God's servant. I serve God only when I do what he bids me, because he bids me. Everything he bids me do is right, and ought to be done for its own sake. Everything he bids me do is fitted to promote my happiness, and ought to be done on this account; but it is only so far as I do it for the Lord's sake that it is obedience. God is the only being in the universe that deserves to be implicitly obeyed. I act like a fool when I believe what the wisest and best man in the world tells me, when I do what the wisest and best man in the world bids me do, if he do not give me a satisfactory reason for it; but I act like a wise man, when I believe what God tells me, and do what God bids me, though I have no other reason but that he tells me, and that he bids me; for there can be no stronger proof of the truth of a proposition than that the omniscient and infinitely-faithful One utters it; no stronger proof that an action is right, than that the infinitely wise and righteous Governor of the world has commanded it. The temper of the servant of God is expressed in these words, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth:" he listens; he listens to understand, and to understand that he may obey. "I will hear," listen to, believe, obey, "what God the Lord will speak."

If we would act as the servants of God, our obedience must be im-

[1] These characteristics are noticed Disc. v. P. i. § 1, p. 90; but, as the illustration here would be imperfect without a reference to them, I have, at the risk of appearing "actum agere," introduced them again.

partial as well as implicit. It will be impartial if it be implicit. There are too many who profess to be Christians who are partial in the law of the Lord. To use a familiar but expressive phrase, they "pick and choose" among his commandments. They do *this*, but they leave *that*, which is commanded with equal explicitness, undone. In every case of this kind it is plain that the soul of true obedience is wanting. If I do anything just because God commands it (and unless I do this, I do not obey God at all), I will do whatever he commands me. Instead of thinking, as some seem to do, that their strictness with regard to certain portions of commanded duty, will be sustained as an excuse for their neglect or violation of other parts of commanded duty, I will account God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and I will abhor every wicked way. "Ye are my friends," says our Lord; ye are my servants, says his Father—our Father, his God—our God, "if ye do," not some things that I command you, not many things that I command you, but "whatsoever I command you."

If we would act as the servants of God, our obedience must be cheerful. It must be obedience from the heart. "God is a Spirit," and he who would serve him must serve him with his spirit. Mere bodily service profits nothing. And not only must there be spirit in the service, there must be a free spirit; not the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption. It must not be the spirit of fear, but of love. There are men who do many things from the fear of punishment. The external service of God (and with them there is, there can be, nothing but external service), is very irksome; but then they hope by submitting to this penance to escape the still more painful sufferings of a future state. It is otherwise with the Christian. His language is, "Truly, O Lord! I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds. I walk at liberty, keeping thy commandments. Thy commandments are not grievous. In keeping thy commandments there is great reward. I will be thy servant forever."

This leads me to remark, that if we would act as the servants of God, our obedience must be persevering. God's servants are not hired servants engaged for a term of years. They are bought with the blood of his Son; and they are to serve him not only on earth, but even in the better world they are to "serve him day and night in his temple," and to "go no more out." The promise is, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." The command with promise is, "Be faithful to death, and I will give you the crown of life." The perfections of the Divine character, and the relations he bears to us, out of which grow our condition as his sons, never change. He always continues our Lord, we must always continue his servants.

There is still another important view of the Christian's duty suggested by his being required to be "as a servant of God," to which I wish shortly to call your attention before leaving this part of the subject. Every Christian should consider himself as engaged in a work committed to him by God, to the right management of which all his time, talents, property, and influence are to be devoted, and a work to be carried on as under God's eye, and of which an account must be given before his tribunal. "No Christian liveth to himself, no Christian dieth to himself. Whether he live, he lives to the

Lord; and whether he die, he dies to the Lord: living and dying he is the Lord's."[1] When a man becomes a Christian, he is called into the vineyard of the Lord, and his work is assigned him; or to vary the figure, he is intrusted with so many talents, and required to occupy them till the Lord come.[2] He is not here to obtain pleasure, honor, or wealth for himself. His business is to "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" to promote in himself and around him that kingdom which is not of this world, "which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."[3] Like his Lord, then, whose meat it was to do the will of his Father who is in heaven, and to finish his work, he should continually be about his Master's business, "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye," remembering that yet a little while, and he will call his stewards to give an account of their stewardship, and "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." The Christian should always act as if these words were sounding in his ears: "Every man's work must be made manifest. The day shall declare it. It shall be revealed by fire. The fire shall try every man's work."[4] Happy is that man whose work shall stand the trial, and abide! He shall receive a great reward.

So much for the illustration of that view of the Christian's duty which corresponds to his condition considered as one of subjection. It is to act "as the servant of God."

The motives which urge Christians to the performance of this duty are numerous and powerful. The service of God is in the highest degree reasonable, pleasant, honorable, and advantageous.

It is a most reasonable thing that Christians should act as the servants of God. It is most reasonable that all men should serve God. A disobedient creature is a moral monster. Can anything be more reasonable than that the will of the all-wise and thrice holy and infinitely benignant Jehovah, should be the rule of the conduct of his creatures? All that men are and have is the gift of God. He gives them their existence, and all their faculties of reason, and action, and enjoyment. "In him they live, and move, and have their being." It is his sun which warms them; his air which they breathe; his flax and wool which clothe them: his corn, and wine, and oil, which support them. It is his Spirit which gives them understanding. He gives them life and favor, and his visitation preserves their souls; and far, infinitely far above these manifestations of kindness, he has, for the great love wherewith he loved our fallen race, given his Son, "that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" and is ready with him to bestow on the guiltiest of the guilty believing on him, "all heavenly and spiritual blessings." Surely, if it be reasonable to be just, if it be reasonable to be grateful, all men should serve God. But, besides these powerful reasons why all men should serve God, very strong additional ones urge Christians to this duty. They have been put in possession of the blessings of the Christian salvation. "In Christ they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of Divine

[1] Rom. xiv. 7, 8.
[2] Luke xix. 13.
[3] Matt. vi. 33. Rom. xiv. 17.
[4] 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14.

grace." The very design of this redemption is, "that they may serve God." "Christ gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."[1] Is it reasonable that the great design of the death of the Son of God should be obstructed? They have had the Holy Spirit in his enlightening, sanctifying, and consoling influences bestowed on them. God has given them "one heart," and put "a new spirit within them; and has taken the stony heart out of their flesh, and has given them a heart of flesh." For what end? "That they may walk in his statutes, and keep his ordinances, and do them."[2] And is it not reasonable that the great design of the gift of the Spirit should be accomplished? It is surely right that the great object of their deliverance from the hands of their enemies should be attained; and that is, that they may "serve God in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their lives." Still farther, they have in the free exercise of their own choice, devoted themselves to God's service. They have said each of them, "I am the Lord's; I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people."[3] And is it not reasonable that these obligations, so freely incurred, so solemnly acknowledged, should be discharged?

But, in the second place, the service of God is in the highest degree pleasant. "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, her paths are peace." "In keeping God's commandments there is great reward." "His commandments are not grievous."[4] It is difficult to convince an unconverted man of this. Indeed, he must become a converted man before he can have personal experimental evidence of these truths. But every converted man knows that it is so. The following is a true as well as a beautiful picture: "Behold that servant of the Lord; he is just rising from his knees, where he has been saying to his heavenly Master, 'Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, according to thy word. Thou art good, and dost good; teach me thy statutes.'[5] Take him aside, and converse with him. Ask him if the service of God is not a delightful one? his answer is, 'I love his commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold; and I delight myself in his commandments, which I love.'[6] But you are often in heaviness? 'Yes; but my sorrow shall be turned into joy. The tears of penitential regret and patient suffering are sweet: and I am never happier than when, with a broken and contrite heart, 'I turn my feet unto his testimonies.'[7] But the world frowns on you? 'What then, God smiles on me; he lifts up the light of his countenance on me. I have peace—peace which the world cannot give, and cannot take away. Heaven is my home; death is my friend. Providence manages all my affairs. My Master in heaven cares for me, and I am "anxious for nothing."' But your happiness is all in prospect? 'O, no! I have "the earnest of the inheritance;" I have a "peace that passeth all understanding;" he is faithful who says, "Great peace have they who

[1] Tit. ii. 14. [2] Ezek. xi. 19, 20.
[3] Isa. xliv. 5. Psal. cxvi. 16, 18. [4] Matt. xi. 30. Psal. xix. 11. 1 John v. 3.
[5] Psal. cxix. 65. [6] Psal. cxix. 47. [7] Psal. cxix. 59.

love my law." I "joy in God;" I find it good to draw near to him. "His statutes are my song in the house of my pilgrimage." It was once otherwise; I once thought, that to be God's servant was to be a slave; what I then thought freedom I now see to be most debasing slavery, and I find that his service is true freedom.' 'O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.'"[1]

In the third place, the service of God is highly honorable. Men count it an honor to serve kings and princes. But what is the honor of being prime minister to the greatest of earthly monarchs, compared with the honor of being the servants of the Most High God, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. It is well said by an apocryphal writer, 'It is a great glory to follow the Lord.'[2] The highest angel in heaven counts this *his* highest honor. The office is honorable, and the discharge of its duties secures honor from him who is the fountain of all honor—obtains the approbation of him whose good opinion is of infinitely more value than the applause of the whole universe of created intelligent beings. "Them who honor me," says Jehovah, "I will honor." "If any man serve me," says our Lord, "him will my Father honor." How far elevated above all earthly honor will the servant of the Lord stand on that day, "when the King shall say to him, Come to me, thou blessed one; well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"[3]

Finally, the service of God is in the highest degree advantageous. Our service of God can never merit anything from him. It is always imperfect and faulty; and, even though it were not so, we should still be unprofitable servants, for we would do only what it is our duty to do. We cannot be "profitable to God, as he who is wise is profitable to himself."[4] We can lay him under no obligation. But he has laid himself under obligations. He has promised that affectionate, sincere, persevering service, shall not lose its reward. His command and promise to his servants is: "Be strong, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded."[5] In illustrating the pleasantness of the service of God, we have seen that it brings its reward to a considerable degree along with it; but there remains "the recompense of reward" to be bestowed when the work is finished. Of that reward we can form but very inadequate ideas. "It does not yet appear what we shall be." We may fairly conclude, however, from the language of Scripture, that "the reward of the inheritance" is incomparably superior not only to all we can enjoy, but to all we can conceive in the present state. It is "a crown of glory and of life;" an "enduring substance;" an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading;" an "eternal weight of glory," "fulness of joy, rivers of pleasure for evermore."[6] And this reward is not more valuable than secure, to all who act as the servants of God. "To them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory,

[1] Eph. i. 14. Psal. cxix. 165, 54; xxxiv. 8. The picture here sketched is more fully delineated by Mr. Jay, in his sermon entitled "Neutrality in Religion Exposed."—Sermons, vol. ii. pp. 337, 8.

[2] Wisd. xxiii. 28.

[3] John xii. 26. Matt. xxv. 21.

[4] Job xxii. 2.

[5] 2 Chron. xv. 7.

[6] Heb. xi. 26. Col. iii. 24. 1 John iii. 1. 1 Pet. v. 4. James i. 12. Heb. x. 34. 1 Pet. i. 4. 2 Cor iv. 17. Psal. xvi. 11.

honor, and immortality, he will render," as their gracious reward, "eternal life." "Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it." "God is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said it, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken it, and shall he not make it good?" [1] Surely, then, Christians ought to act as the servants of God. Constrained by the mercies of God, they should present themselves to him "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is rational worship;" they should be "steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the service of God, knowing that their labors shall not be in vain in the Lord." [2]

These motives are directly addressed to those who are engaged in the service of God; their force will be perceived and acknowledged by them, and I trust under their influence they will become more diligent in the discharge of their honorable and delightful duties than ever. But what shall we say to those who are not free, or if free, are what the apostle terms "free from righteousness;" who are not the servants of God, but the slaves of his and their great enemy? We could say much of their degradation, and criminality, and wretchedness; but we prefer "proclaiming liberty to these captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are thus bound." [3] Fellow-sinners, we call your attention to the truth, "the word of the truth of the gospel." That truth, understood and believed, will make you free, free indeed; and that very truth which will loose the fetters of guilt and depravity, of Satan and sin, will bind on you the easy yoke, lay on you the light burden of the Divine service. Remaining in your present state, which you well know is far from a happy one, you will become more and more miserable throughout eternity. Unless you are released from the chains of condemnation and depravity, you must ere long, bound hand and foot, be cast into the prison of hell, whose adamantine gates open only inward. He whom you have chosen as your master, shall then be constituted your jailer and tormentor. "He opens not the house of his prisoners." The prey of the mighty shall not then be taken away, nor the captives of the terrible one be delivered. To his prisoners the gladsome sound, Go forth, will never come. Prisoners of hope! It comes now to you. It has come to you often, but you have lent a deaf ear to it. It comes to you once more, it may be only once more. May it not come in vain!

NOTE A. p. 255.

This verse is obviously not a complete sentence, and must be considered as connected either with what goes before, or with what follows, or with both. Its meaning and design cannot well be distinctly apprehended, unless this question respecting its construction be satisfactorily resolved. If it be considered as connected with what precedes it, then the words are descriptive of the manner in which the duty of submission, for the Lord's sake,

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[1] Heb. x. 23. 1 Thess. v. 24. Numb. xxiii. 19. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 58. [3] Isa. lxi. 1.

to every human institution "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well, whether to the king or emperor, as supreme; or to governors, as to them sent by him"—*i. e.* to the institute of civil government, whatever its form may be—ought to be performed by Christians. It ought to be performed in a manner suitable to their condition, as at once a condition of freedom and of subjection; in a way becoming at once the glorious liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and that entire subjection to the mind and will of God which befits those who are His servants. It intimates that, "being set at liberty by Christ, they are not to enthral themselves to any creature, however elevated, nor to submit to any human institution as slaves, as if the ordinance or institution itself, as a human ordinance and institution, did by any inherent power bind the conscience; but that, as the Lord's freemen, in a manner becoming so exalted a character, they should yield a cheerful subjection to the power of civil magistrates, and a ready obedience to their lawful commands, from a regard to the authority of Christ, the sole Lord of their conscience, requiring them so to do,—taking heed 'not to use their liberty for an occasion to the flesh,' not making that a cloak or excuse for disrespect or disobedience to their civil superiors: for though, in the highest sense of the term, they be not the servants of men, but of God, and therefore are not bound to obey any human command without a reference to the authority of God requiring them to do so; yet, on the ground of his command to be subject to the higher powers, they are bound to yield to them such honor and obedience as does not interfere with the supreme reverence and obedience which they owe to him as the only Lord of the conscience."[1] This, from the punctuation adopted by our translators, seems to have been their view of the reference and meaning of the words. The whole passage, from the beginning of the 13th verse to the end of the first clause of the 17th, may be viewed as one sentence; in which case, the words of the 16th verse stand connected both with what goes before and with what follows. Thus, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every ordinance of man for punishing evil-doers and rewarding those who do well, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors as to them who are sent by him (for so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God, honor them all—all civil magistrates, whether supreme or subordinate." To the first mode of connecting the 16th verse it is an objection, that it seems an unnatural mode of concluding a sentence, and gives a very disjointed aspect to the whole period; and to the second, that the four injunctions in the 17th verse are so closely connected, that it seems improper to separate one of them from the rest. We are disposed, therefore, to consider the 16th verse as the commencement of a new sentence, which closes with the 17th.

Note B. p. 261.

The passage referred to, Rom. vi. 20, has received another interpretation. It has been supposed that ἐλεύθεροι here is used as if it were the participle ἐλευθερωθέντες, as it seems to be, ch. vii. 3, where ἐλεύθερα is obviously equivalent to κατῄργηται in verse 2. In this case τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ must be rendered, "by righteousness;" and the words, ἐλεύθεροι ἦτε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ are the statement of the fact, the consequences of which are stated in verse 22. This secures to δικαιοσύνη its ordinary meaning in the epistle; and the use of ἀπὸ in verse 22 seems to intimate, that another idea is meant to be conveyed there, than by the use of the dative without a preposition, in verse 20.

Note C. p. 279.

"When he was to do for us the part of a Redeemer, he was to redeem us from the curse of the law, not from the command of it; to save us from the wrath of God, not from his government. Had it been otherwise, so firm and indissoluble is the connection between our duty and our felicity, that the Sovereign Ruler had been eternally injured, and we not advantaged. Were we to have been set free from the preceptive obligation of God's holy law; then, most of all, from that most fundamental precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, soul, might, and mind.' Had this been redemption, which supposes only what is evil and hurtful as that we are to be redeemed from? This were a strange sort of self-repugnant redemption, not from sin and misery, but from

[1] Sanderson.

our duty and felicity. This were so to be redeemed as to be still lost, and every way lost, both to God and to ourselves forever. Redeemed from loving God! What a monstrous thought! Redeemed from what is the great, active, and fruitive principle—the source of obedience and blessedness—the eternal spring, even in the heavenly state of adoration and fruition. This had been to legitimate everlasting enmity and rebellion against the blessed God, and to redeem us into an eternal hell of horror and misery to ourselves. This had been to cut off from the Supreme Ruler of the world forever, so considerable a limb of his most rightful dominion; and to leave us as miserable as everlasting separation from the fountain of life and blessedness could make us."—HOWE. "None can be exempted from this law, unless he will be banished from his own essence, and be excommunicated from human nature."—CULVERWEL.

DISCOURSE XII.

A FOURFOLD VIEW OF THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS AS FREE, YET THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

1 Pet. ii. 17.—Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

In our last discourse our attention was turned to the view which the preceding verse gives us of the condition and character of true Christians. Their *condition* is one both of liberty and of subjection: they are "free," yet "the servants of God." They are "free:" free in reference to God, both as to state and disposition; free in reference to man; free in reference to the powers and principles of evil: they are "the servants of God," redeemed by the blood of his Son; formed by his Spirit to the character of servants, being made acquainted with his will, and disposed to do it; devoted by their own most free choice to his service, and actually engaged in that service; obeying his law, and promoting his cause. Their *duty*, when viewed generally, consists in acting in a manner suited to their condition, as a condition equally of freedom and subjection. They are to act "as free" in all the varied senses in which they enjoy the privilege of liberty, guarding against abusing that privilege in any of its forms, "as a cloak," pretext, apology, or excuse for sin; and they are to act "as the servants of God," to cultivate the principle of obedience, habitually keeping in view those perfections of the Divine character, and those relations which they bear to God, in which the obligation to serve God originates, and the belief of which is the grand means which the Holy Spirit employs to fit and dispose us to recognize and discharge that obligation; to make themselves acquainted with the rule of obedience, carefully studying the word of God, observing the providence of God, and seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God; and to exercise this principle, and apply this rule in actual obedience, both inward and outward, both active and passive.

To this general view of the Christian's duty, as an acting in conformity to his condition, the apostle adds a somewhat more detailed and particular account, for the purpose of illustration. In the words before us, he specifies four different ways in which Christians are to conduct themselves "as free," and yet "as the servants of God." They are to "honor all men;" they are to "love the brotherhood;" they are to "fear God;" they are to "honor the king." Let us now proceed to inquire into the meaning of these Divine injunctions, and into the motives which urge to a cheerful compliance with them. And while we do so, may God give us the understanding mind and

the obedient heart! May He "open our understandings," to understand this portion of "Scripture given by inspiration of God," that we may become wiser; and open our hearts to love it, that it may be the effectual means of making us better as well as wiser; giving us clearer views of what is our duty, and a deeper impression of our obligations to discharge it!

"Here," as the good Archbishop remarks, "are no dark sentences to puzzle the understanding, nor large discourses, and long periods, to burden the memory. As the Divine Wisdom says of her instructions in the book of Proverbs, These precepts are all 'plain;' there is nothing 'froward or perverse,' nothing 'wreathed,' as it is in the margin, involved, distorted, perplexed, difficult, in them. And this gives check to a double folly among men, contrary the one to the other, but both agreeing in mistaking and wronging the word of God. The one is, of those who despise the word, and that doctrine and preaching which is according to it, for its plainness and simplicity; the other, of those who complain of its difficulty and darkness. As for the first, they certainly do not apprehend the true end for which the word is designed, that is, to be the law of our life; and that it is mainly requisite in laws that they be both brief and clear. It is our guide to light and happiness; and if that which ought to be our light were darkness, how great would that darkness be! It is true that there be dark and deep passages in Scripture for the exercise, yea for the humbling, yea for the amazing and astonishing, of the sharpest-sighted readers. But it argues much the pride and vanity of men's minds, when they busy themselves only in these, and throw aside altogether the most necessary, which are therefore the easiest and plainest truths in it, evidencing that they had rather be learned than holy, 'wise than good,' and have still more mind to 'the tree of knowledge' than to 'the tree of life.' In hearing the word, too many are still gaping after new notions, something to add to the stock of their speculative and discoursing knowledge, loathing the daily manna of such profitable exhortations, and 'requiring meat for their lust.' There is an intemperance of the mind as well as of the mouth. You would think it, and may be not spare to call it, a poor cold sermon, that was made up of such plain precepts as these: 'Honor all men: love the brotherhood: fear God: honor the king:' and yet this is the language of God. It is his way, this foolish despicable way, by which he guides and brings to heaven them that believe."

As to those who complain of the difficulties of Scripture, let them but believe and do what is perfectly level to the apprehension of the simplest mind, and they will thus take the most probable means of arriving at just views of what is obscure; for he is faithful who has promised—"If any man *will* do"—that is, be willing to do—"the will of my Father in heaven, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God;"[1] and, at all events, he will soon and certainly find his way to that region where all difficulties are removed, all mysteries are unveiled, all obscurities are explained. There, in God's light, he shall see light; no longer seeing as through a glass darkly, but face to face; no longer knowing in part only, but knowing even as he is

[1] John vii. 17.

known. But to return to the illustration of the apostle's four comprehensive precepts.

I.—CHRISTIANS ARE TO "HONOR ALL MEN."

The first particular duty which he calls on Christians to perform "as free, and yet as the servants of God," is the honoring of all men. "Honor all men." To bring out the true and the full meaning of this important and very comprehensive precept of the christian law, it is necessary to remark, that "all men" is here used in contrast with some men, and to inquire who are these some men referred to; and in looking into the immediate context, we find two classes of men mentioned, to either, or to both of whom, the apostle may be considered as referring.

There are "the brotherhood"—that is, true Christians, "the chosen generation, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people, the dwellers in light, the people of God." If the reference is to them, the sentiment contained in the words before us is: 'While "the saints, the excellent ones of the earth," ought to be the objects of your highest respect and honor, as well as affection, yet you are not warranted to regard unbelieving men with contempt because they do not belong to the Holy Society, are not "partakers of the benefit;" but, on the contrary, wherever, from civil or natural, or from intellectual endowments, or moral dispositions, they are the proper objects of respect, you are bound to render honor to whom honor is due.'

The brotherhood is not, however, the only class of men mentioned in the context. There are also "the men ordained for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well: the king as supreme, and the governors who are sent by him." These are to be honored, all of them honored, by being obeyed and submitted to. If the reference is to them, then the sentiment conveyed is: 'While magistrates are to be honored in a manner suited to the nature and design of the office which they fill, no human being is to be despised. There is a respect due to every man, just because he is a man; there is an honor due to the king, but there is also an honor due to all men.' As the language of the apostle, without using undue violence, may be considered as suggesting both these important and closely connected sentiments, I will endeavor briefly to illustrate and enforce them in their order.

§ 1.—*Honor not to be confined to the brotherhood, but rendered to all to whom it is due.*

The first principle which we consider, as suggested by the apostle's words, is, that the respectful regards of Christians are not to be confined "to the brotherhood," but are to be extended to unbelieving men, according to the claims which, from civil or natural relation, from intellectual endowments or moral dispositions, they may have on them. Honor is to be yielded to all to whom honor is due, though "aliens from the commonwealth of" spiritual "Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise."

The injunction, viewed in this light, like the strikingly similar one, "Use not your liberty as a cloak of wickedness," seems, from the peculiar circumstances and previous habits of thought of many of the primitive Christians, to have been far from unnecessary. It seems plain that a very large proportion at least of those to whom this epistle was addressed, consisted of Jewish converts. The Jews were accustomed to consider their own nation as the chosen people of Jehovah, and on this account as worthy of the highest honor; while they regarded the Gentiles, the nations as they termed them, all the rest of mankind, with a malignant contempt, which its objects, in most instances, repaid with liberal interest. They generally considered all authority exercised by Gentiles over Jews as impious usurpation; and if they submitted to it, they did so "for wrath sake," not "for conscience sake;" not because obedience was in their estimation right, but because disobedience was found in their experience unsafe; not from a sense of duty, but from a fear of punishment. There was some hazard that these habits of thought and feeling, modified by their new circumstances and relations, might influence the Jewish converts: that they might regard the spiritual nation, of which they had become a part by believing, with sentiments similar to those with which they used to contemplate "Israel according to the flesh;" and might consider unbelievers, whether Jews or heathens, in a light corresponding to that in which they looked on the Gentiles in the days of their Judaism; and indeed, from various passages in the apostolic writings, it seems, to say the least, highly probable that this hazard was, to some extent, realized.

It was of importance, then, for the apostles distinctly to assert, that the new religious relations and duties of Christians by no means unhinged their existing natural and civil relations, or interfered with the duties rising out of these, except by furnishing clearer directions for, and stronger motives to, their performance. Christian subjects are bound to honor heathen or Jewish magistrates. The command, when there were no magistrates that even professed Christianity, was, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. The powers that be are ordained by God." [1] "Submit to every human institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well." Christian servants were to regard with the honor which finds its expression in cheerful, conscientious, uncomplaining obedience, their heathen masters. "Servants," says the apostle in the next verse, "be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." And the Apostle Paul, speaking of masters not believing, says, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." [2] Christian wives were bound to honor their heathen husbands. The conjugual relation was not dissolved, nor its duties changed, by conversion to Christianity. The law is, "If the woman hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him;" [3] and it is plainly to christian wives in these circumstances, that the commandment in the beginning of the 3d chapter of this epistle is addressed:

[1] Rom. xiii. 1. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 18. 1 Tim. vi. 1. [3] 1 Cor. vii. 13.

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." Christian children were bound to honor heathen parents by providing for their support when necessary, and by "obeying them in the Lord"—that is, so far as their commands did not interfere with those of their Master in heaven.

On the same principle, wherever a Christian met with distinguished intellectual endowment or acquirement, extensive knowledge, remarkable wisdom, or with manifestations of integrity, public spirit, patriotism, benevolence, in unbelieving Jews or heathens, he was not to shut his mind against the admission that such intellectual and moral excellencies did exist, nor his heart against the feeling of respect and honor which they are naturally fitted to awaken, because their owners did not belong to the christian community. In such cases though so far as the display of moral qualities was concerned, they were, we believe, of very rare occurrence in the primitive age, Christians were to do full justice, and "render honor to whom honor was due." In yielding honor to heathens, corresponding to the natural and civil relations of society, they did honor to Him who established these relations; and in yielding honor to heathens corresponding to their intellectual and moral endowments, they did honor to Him who conferred these gifts.

The principle we have been illustrating is of universal application, and the precept grounded on it of permanent obligation. Christians of the present age are equally bound, with those of the primitive age, to "honor all men" in the sense in which we have explained these words. The circumstance that individuals, who from their natural or civil relation, or from their intellectual or moral qualities, have a claim on respect, are not Christians in the only proper sense of the term, though necessarily giving to that respect a different character from what it would naturally assume if they were Christians, ought to be felt by true Christians as a reason why they should be particularly careful in answering such a claim. They should act on the principle, recommended to christian wives by the apostle, to guide them in their conduct to their heathen husbands. In that readiness to acknowledge what deserves to be honored wherever it is found, they may do much to remove prejudice, and to recommend Christianity to a favorable consideration; and "win, without the word," those to whom there might be no opportunity of presenting the word; or who, if it were presented to them, would not listen to it.

Few things have injured the cause of genuine Christianity more, than a bigoted blindness on the part of some of its professors to the unquestionable claims to respect of various kinds, which some men possess, who, unhappily for themselves as well as the world, have neglected or resisted the evidence of the truth as it is in Jesus. Such men are deeply to be pitied; they are, in many cases, greatly to be blamed; in no case are they blameless; but still their fault, their fatal fault, if persisted in, ought not to prevent us from honoring them for that which, in their station, or attainments, or character, or conduct, is really honorable. Those men who please themselves with the

thought, that in despising those men they are showing their enlightened zeal for Christianity, are greatly mistaken. They are manifesting their own ignorant, ill-judging mind, and their wayward, ill-regulated temper. Their zeal is "a cloak of maliciousness." In the name of the religion of love, they are gratifying low and malignant feelings; and, if they are true Christians, they, plainly in this case, "know not what spirit they are of."

And surely if the law of Christ expressly requires honor to be given to men according to their rank, and endowments, and attainments, and character, though they are not Christians at all, its spirit must be very hostile to that petty, selfish, malignant temper, which, availing itself of the unnaturally divided state of Christ's church, leads those possessed by it to withhold honor from men the most distinguished for their talents, their worth, and their usefulness, and, it may be, to cherish towards them sentiments of bitter contempt, merely because they belong to a different section of the great body bearing the name of our common Lord, separated by barriers which exist only in their prejudiced minds from that to which they happen to be attached. Alas! how much has there been among christian denominations of "biting and devouring" one another, and "smiting fellow-servants," who ought to have been "esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake!" How different from, how opposite to, the spirit of the injunction before us, "Honor all men," is this! Surely if we are to honor all men who deserve honor, much more are we to honor all christian men who deserve honor, though they follow not with us.

§ 2.—*Honor not to be confined to classes, but extended to all men.*

But we apprehend the apostle's words not only suggest the principle, that the respectful regards of Christians are not to be confined to the brotherhood, but are to be extended to unbelieving men, according to the claims which, from natural or civil relation, or from intellectual endowments or moral dispositions, they may have on them: They appear to us to intimate another very important principle, that there is a respect due to every human being, and that it is a christian duty to cherish that respect, and to act accordingly.

There is an honor which we owe to men, just because they are men: an honor of course due to all men, without exception and without distinction. That honor is not the honor of moral esteem. There are individuals, many individuals, that deserve to be approved and admired for their moral qualities. Man, as God made him, deserved thus to be honored; but the moral qualities which universally characterize mankind as a race, in their present state, are those which are the proper objects, not of approbation, but of disapprobation. What is the testimony of Him who knows what is in man? "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." In man, that is, "in his flesh," that is, a man in his present fallen state, "there dwelleth no good thing." Fools, they say in their heart, there is no God; "they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven

upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues have they used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."[1] This is what man is, what man has made himself, the very reverse indeed of what God made him; yet what he is, and what he must continue to be, till God new-make him, "create him anew in Christ Jesus to good works."

The foundation of the claim for honor to all men, as men, does not then consist in their moral state as exemplified in their conduct; that, in a rightly constituted mind, must call forth the sentiment of strong disapprobation, not unmingled with contempt, disapprobation on account of its wickedness, contempt on account of its folly, both of which are plainly immeasurable: it lies in their possession of a spiritual, rational, responsible, immortal nature. Every human being is, from the very constitution of his nature, of far more importance and dignity, than a whole universe of inanimate matter, or even of irrational animated beings.[2] Every human being has the capacity of apprehending truth and its evidence, of distinguishing what is true from what is false, and what is good from what is evil; every man has the faculty of knowing, loving, praising, serving, and enjoying God; every man is destined to an immortality of being. An eternity of ever-growing knowledge, and holiness, and happiness, or of ever-augmenting depravity, and degradation, and misery, is before every individual of our race. These faculties form the native nobility of every human being; and to think, and feel, and act, towards every human being, as possessed of this nobility, is to honor all men, and to perform the duty enjoined in the text. And surely to despise the possessor of that for the loss of which the gain of the whole world could not compensate, however humble his rank, however low the degree of his civilization, however limited his knowledge, ay, however depraved his character, is obviously at once irrational and immoral. The feeling such endowments should excite in their possessor is mingled gratitude and fear. The feeling they should excite in others, that of solemn interest.[3]

The cultivation of an habitual reverence for man, as man, the noblest of the works God in this region of his universe, and, though fallen from his high estate, capable of, destined to, restoration to more than his pristine glory, is obviously of the greatest importance. It affords constant motive, and gives right direction, to our benevolent feelings and exertions in reference to our fellow-men. It impresses us with the thought, how much good, and how much good of the very highest kind, may be done, when such a being as *man* is the object of our benevolence. It leads us chiefly to think of, and provide for,

[1] Gen. vi. 5. Psal. xiv. 1. Rom. iii. 10–18.

[2] "There is an indelible character of dignity engraven on the reasonable nature by the hand of God."—BATES.

[3] NEANDER finely describes the feeling referred to as "a consciousness of the higher dignity of man's nature, in the oneness of the Divine image in all."

and relieve, those wants and miseries which belong to him as the object of our reverence; his wants as an intelligent, responsible, religious, immortal being; and it at the same time guides us in the use of the means fitted to gain the desired end in reference to such a being, leading us to remember what, even by some persons not destitute of benevolence, seems often overlooked or forgotten, that in endeavoring to reclaim and relieve him, we must deal with him as a being who has reason, and conscience, and feeling, as well as ourselves; who may be reasoned or persuaded into a better mind, but cannot be scolded, or beaten, or bribed into it, and who must "give an account of himself to God."

The want of this feeling has contributed, in no limited degree, to the production and permanence of some of the greatest social evils which prevail in the world. Had man had reverence for man, slavery with all its horrors could never have existed.[1] Every feeling like honoring our common nature must be extinct, before man can make property of his brother, can treat him as if he was not a person at all, but a thing, a portion of his goods and chattels. Had this sentiment prevailed, there would have been no murder; far less would there have been those wholesale legalized murders which civilized nations commit under the name of war. The notorious disgraceful fact never could have existed, that it is no uncommon thing for men not only outwardly to express, but inwardly to feel, more regard for some dog or horse they love, than for poor distressed partakers of their own nature; thus "reflecting," as Archbishop Leighton says, "at once dishonor on themselves and mankind." It has been justly remarked, that "respect is the parent of kindness. From contempt to injury the transition is short and easy. He that despises human nature, wants only the opportunity to oppress man. The pride of man leads him to treat the sensitive nature that is beneath him, as if it were so much inanimate matter. It is the feeling that they are so far beneath him, that induces him to be so careless of the sufferings of the lower creation, and just the more careless as they are inferior to his level. He scarcely thinks of moving in the slightest degree out of his way to save the reptile from pain, or mutilation, or death. And it is on the same principle that much, very much, of the oppression exercised, and the injury inflicted by one class of men on another, is to be accounted for. Would so many rich men have oppressed their poorer brethren, ground their faces, and despised their cause; would so many rulers have wrested judgment, and crushed those whom they should have protected; would so many princes have spilt as in sport the blood of thousands, and made the murder of mankind a game; would so many tyrants have trampled on the neck of nations, and treated millions as made for one, had they honored man, had they considered that every human creature, whatever may be the meanness of his birth, the contractedness of his education, the depth of his destitution, is an image of God, an heir of immortality, a being containing in him capacities

[1] Misapprehension as to the higher nature common to all men, connected with the notion of different races originally of different degrees or even kinds of mental endowment, go far to *account* for the prevalence of slavery among the civilized Pagans.—Aristot. Pol. i. 2. A still more discreditable parentage must be found for the monstrous usage among self-called civilized Christians.

of illimitable improvement; a wonderful creature, who in its chrysalis state, under a humble form, conceals within his bosom wings which, if expanded, may carry him upward and onward in the pursuit of glory, honor, and immortality, forever."[1] It is because man does not honor man, that there is so much reason for the complaint—

> "The natural bond
> Of brotherhood is sever'd as the flax
> That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
> He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
> Not color'd like his own; and, having power
> To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
> Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey,—
> Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
> With stripes, that mercy, with a bleeding heart,
> Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast."[2]

The prevalence of infidel opinions is deeply to be deprecated, for many reasons; and, among these reasons, its tendency to destroy man's reverence for man is by no means the least important. This has been put in a very striking point of view by Robert Hall, and I make no apology for laying the substance of his illustration before you: "The supposition that man is a moral and accountable being, destined to survive the stroke of death, and to live in a future world in a never-ending state of happiness or misery, makes him a creature of incomparably greater consequence than the opposite supposition. When we consider him as placed here by the Almighty Ruler in a state of probation, and that the present life is his period of trial, the first link in a vast and interminable chain which stretches into eternity, he assumes a dignified character in our eyes. Everything that relates to him becomes interesting; and to trifle with his happiness is felt to be the most unpardonable levity. On the opposite supposition, he is a contemptible creature, whose existence and happiness are insignificant. He is nothing more than an animal, distinguished from other animals merely by the vividness and multiplicity of his perceptions. He is entirely of the earth earthy, and his spirit, like those of his fellows, goes down to the earth. From these principles it is a fair inference, that to extinguish human life by the hand of violence, must be quite a different thing in the eyes of a sceptic from what it is in those of a Christian. With the sceptic it is merely the diverting the course of a little red fluid called blood; it is merely lessening by one the number of many millions of fugitive contemptible creatures. The Christian sees in the same event an accountable being cut off from a state of probation, and hurried, perhaps unprepared, into the presence of his Judge, to hear that final, that irrevocable sentence, which is to fix him forever in an unalterable condition of felicity or of woe."[3]

Reverence for man is the great security for property, liberty, and life; and just views of man as a responsible and immortal being, are the foundation of this reverence. Most justly, as well as forcibly, has the distinguished author referred to remarked, that "the speculations of atheistical philosophy matured, gave birth to a ferocity which

[1] Joseph Fawcett. [2] Cowper.
[3] Modern Infidelity Considered. Works, i. p. 41–47.

converted the most polished people in Europe into a horde of assassins. Having been taught by them to consider mankind as little better than a nest of insects, in the fierce conflicts of party they trampled on them without pity, and extinguished them without remorse."

Besides the obvious connection which the principle enjoined in the text has with the security and promotion of all the more important interests of society, there are other and most powerful motives which urge us to cultivate and exemplify it. To the question, Why should we honor all men? we have already given the reply, Because all men, viewed as rational, responsible, and immortal, deserve to be honored; and because the honoring of men is necessary, in order to the attainment and security of the greatest amount of social happiness. We now add: we should honor all men; for God, the fountain of true honor, the best judge of what is to be honored, honors men, honors all men. He has honored them, in making them honorable in the possession of those capacities to which we have already referred. The eighth Psalm, whether descriptive of man in the primitive, or of man in the millennial state, is a striking proof that God honors men. And in the place he has assigned them among his creatures on this earth, and in the arrangements of his providence, he takes kind notice of the whole race. He makes his sun to shine, and his rain to descend on them all. "Have we not all one Father," and is he not a kind Father to us all? "Behold God is mighty, yet he despiseth not any." He is "mindful" of our race, he "visits" man.[1]

For reasons known only to himself, but necessarily most sufficient, he shows a respect to men which he did not show to angels. When men ruined themselves, he did not act as if their perdition would be a slight matter, an easily reparable loss. He was gracious to them, and said, "Deliver them from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." And their deliverer sent by him was not an angel, not the highest of angels, but his own Son; and that deliverance was obtained by nothing short of the sacrifice of the life of that Son. What an apparatus of means has he called into being for bringing this deliverance home to individual men, in the revelation of his word, the ordinances of his worship, the influence of his Spirit! And these amazing dispensations are the result of love to the race, love to the world, the love of man;[2] and the deliverance is not a deliverance for men of particular nations, or particular ranks, but for men of every rank, every nation, Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, male and female, bond and free.[3]

In his dealings with man he honors him, treating him in a way corresponding to his rational and moral nature. He does not act towards him as if he were a piece of inanimate matter, or a brute animal. He seeks to enlighten and convince his mind, and to engage his affections. He says, "Come now, let us reason together." He employs "cords of a man, bands of love;" arguments and motives fitted to his reason, and conscience, and heart, to draw him to himself, and bind him to his service.[4]

[1] Psal. viii. 5–8; comp. Heb. ii. 6, &c. Matt. v. 45. Mal. ii. 10. Job xxxvi. 5.
[2] John iii. 16. Tit. iii. 4. φιλανθρωπία. [3] Job xxxiii. 24. Col. iii. 11.
[4] Isa. i. 18. Hos. xi. 4.

Jesus Christ, the only begotten of God, honors man. He has taken into union with his divinity *man's* nature. He never so honored angels: they count it an honor to call him Lord; but man may, without presumption, call him brother. "The word of life," the living one who was "in the beginning with God, who was and is God, became flesh." "Inasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same;" and in human nature he died for men, "the just in the room of the unjust," giving himself a "ransom for all," and bringing in an everlasting salvation—a salvation suited to all, needed by all, and to which all are invited, with an assurance that "whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life." His command is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It is his will that his salvation should be brought near "to every creature under heaven."[1] Farther, he carried human nature to heaven with him. A *man* sits on the throne of the universe; one who is not ashamed to call men brethren, and whom the most abject of the human race may call brother. This is the true dignity of human nature. "Human nature," as an old divine forcibly remarks, "has become adorable as the true Shekinah, the everlasting palace of the supreme Majesty, wherein the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily; the most holy shrine of the divinity, the orb of inaccessible light, as this, and more than all this, if more could be expressed, or, if we could explain that text, 'The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'"[2]

It is obvious, then, that we cannot treat disrespectfully or contumeliously any human being without dishonoring God and his Son. "When a piece even of base metal is coined with the king's stamp," to use Bishop Sanderson's illustration, "and made current by his edict, no man may henceforth presume either to refuse it in payment, or to abate the value of it; so God, having stamped his own image upon every man, and withal signified his blessed pleasure, how precious he would have him to be in our eyes and esteem, by express edict proclaiming, 'At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man: I require every man to be his brother's keeper; for in the image of God made he man;'[3] we must look to answer it as a high contempt of that sacred Majesty, if we set any man at naught, or make less account of him than God would have us. The contumelious use of the image is in common construction ever understood as a dishonor meant to the prototype. The Romans, when they meant to set a mark of public disgrace or dishonor on any eminent person, did manifest their intention by throwing down, breaking, trampling upon, or doing some other like disgrace to their statues or pictures. And Solomon, in sundry places, interpreteth all acts of oppressing, mocking, or otherwise despising our neighbors, not without a strong reflection upon God himself; as leading to the contempt and dishonor of their Maker. 'He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoreth HIM hath mercy on the poor.' 'Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker;' and surely there is much force in this interrogration, 'Why settest thou at naught, not only thine

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 18. 1 Tim. ii. 6. John iii. 16. Mark xvi. 15. Col. i. 23. Heb. ii. 11.
[2] Barrow.
[3] Gen. ix. 5.

own brother, but the brother of the Lord of Glory?' Why despiseth thou him for whom Christ died?"[1]

There is indeed something revoltingly unnatural, something inconceivably mean and base, something grotesquely absurd, in a human being regarding with contempt any other human being. Surely, the man who treats any man as a mean contemptible creature, should in a double sense be ashamed of *himself*, for what is HE but a *man?* How insignificant the distinction which elevates one man above another, in comparison of the distinction which elevates all men above the brutal tribes? How little does wealth, or rank, or even human learning, bulk in the eye of angels? How highly do they estimate reason, conscience, affection, capacity for being like God, immortality? The man who contemns any man, shows that he does not so much value himself because he is a man, but that whatever respect he has for human nature, flows from its being his nature. How mean, how absurd, how thoroughly contemptible, is pride! Surely, "pride was not made for man, nor haughtiness of heart for him who is born of a woman."

The sentiment of honor for man, as man, which we have been illustrating and recommending, should manifest itself in the whole of our conduct to our fellow-men, especially to those who in any respect may be our inferiors, whether in intellect, or talent, or acquirement, or moral worth, or rank, or wealth, leading us to "condescend to them that are of low estate:" but it takes its best form, when it leads us to use all the means in our power to raise our fellow-men in the scale of true honor and excellence; to rescue them from the influence of ignorance, and error, and superstition; to put down slavery, oppression, war, and misgovernment in all its endlessly varied forms; to make men free, intelligent, industrious, moral, religious, and happy, to the greatest attainable degree on earth; to save them from the shame and everlasting contempt which awaits unimproved advantages and unanswered responsibilities in eternity; and to secure to them that "glory, honor, and immortality," which, while it is "the gift of God through Jesus Christ," is to be sought for and obtained "in a constant continuance in well-doing."[2]

Few things are better fitted at once to stimulate and to guide in such noble enterprises, than enlightened, impressive views of the true grandeur of human nature. While humbled to the dust with the overwhelming evidence, without us, within us, and around us, of the fearful degradation of human nature by sin, let us never forget what that nature was when God made it, what it is still capable of, what it still is when God makes it anew on earth, what it will be when he completes the work of transformation in heaven. Human nature was a stately, beautiful fabric as God reared it. It is majestic even in ruins, exciting in every right constituted mind awe as well as sorrow.[3] As its desolations are repaired by the plastic powers of the Divine Spirit, symmetry and beauty are seen developing themselves; and when, in the heaven of heavens, man stands forth, nearest of all created beings to Him who sits on the right hand of the Divine Majesty, bearing the image of the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven,

[1] Prov. xiv. 31; xvii. 5. Rom. xiv. 10, 15. [2] Rom. vi. 23, 11, 7. [3] See note A.

then will it be felt by all intelligent beings, that human nature is indeed one of the "chief of the works of God," one of the most wonderful results of Divine wisdom, and power, and love.

Right views, equally of man's meanness and his greatness, are to be obtained only by studying the representations which are contained in the Divine word, an impressive abstract of which is contained in the following plain but striking stanzas:

"Lord! what is man? extremes how wide
In his mysterious nature join:—
The flesh to worms and dust allied;
The soul immortal and divine.
Divine at first—a holy flame,
Kindled by the Almighty's breath—
Till, stain'd by sin, it soon became
The seat of darkness, strife, and death.

"But Jesus—Oh! amazing love!—
Assum'd our nature as his own;
Obey'd and suffer'd in our place,
Then took it with him to his throne.
Now what is man, when grace reveals
The virtue of a Saviour's blood?
Again a life divine he feels,
Despises earth, and walks with God.

"And what, in yonder realms above,
Is ransom'd man ordain'd to be?
With honor, holiness, and love,
No seraph more adorn'd than he.
Nearest the throne, and first in song,
Man shall his hallelujahs raise;
While wond'ring angels round him throng,
And swell the chorus of his praise."[1]

He who believes this, he alone who believes this, will "honor all men."

II.—CHRISTIANS ARE TO "LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD."

THE "BROTHERHOOD," and OUR DUTY AS CHRISTIANS TOWARDS THE BROTHERHOOD: these are the two interesting topics to which our attention is now to be successively directed.

§ 1.—*Of "the brotherhood."*

A brotherhood is an association of brothers. Now, who are the brethren that are here referred to, and what is that association of them which is termed "the brotherhood?" It is scarcely necessary to say, that the language is not here used in its strictly literal signification: the signification in which John is termed the brother of James, and Andrew of Peter. In its analogical or figurative employment, which is manifold, it entirely overlooks the distinction of sex, and far overleaps the boundaries of families. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, male nor female," here. It is usual in Scripture to speak of all the descendants of

[1] Olney Hymn.

Jacob as brethren, and it is no uncommon thing to represent all human beings as brethren. The reason of this is obvious. With regard to their animal frames, they are all the descendants of the original pair; for "God has made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth;" and with regard to their immortal minds, they are all "the offspring of God." He is "the Father of Spirits." "In him we live, and move, and have our being." "We have one Father, one God hath created us."[1] From our common human, and our common Divine, paternity, we are all members of the same family; we are all brethren.

On the footing of this common relation, mankind form a great variety of associations for a corresponding variety of objects, all of which, from what lies at their foundation, may be called brotherhoods. A nation is a great brotherhood. Municipal bodies, societies for promoting science, for diffusing knowledge, for relieving distress: all these are so many minor brotherhoods. To all mankind, as brethren, we owe a duty, and that duty is love; and to all the brotherhoods, all the associations, of our human brethren, to which we belong, we likewise owe a duty, the fulfilment of which also is expressed in that all-comprehensive word, love; and the manner in which this principle of love should manifest itself towards all our brethren of mankind individually, and towards all the particular brotherhoods with which we may be connected, and the motives which urge to the cultivation and exercise of this principle in all these various ways, would afford abundant materials for interesting and useful discussion.

But it cannot be reasonably doubted, that "the brotherhood" spoken of in our text, is an association of men, not as men, but as Christians. "The brotherhood" to be loved, is placed in contrast with the "all men" who are to be honored; and therefore our appropriate employment, in this part of our discourse, is to inquire in what peculiar sense Christians are brethren, and what we are to understand by that brotherhood, that association of brethren, which ought to be the object of the love of all individual Christians.

It is obvious, from the Acts of the Apostles and the Apostolical Epistles, that "brethren" was the first name used to express the mutual relation of Christians to each other, as "disciples" was that employed to express their common relation to their Lord. It was indeed the name given them by their Lord: "One," said he, "is your Master, and all ye are brethren."[2]

The giving of this figurative appellation to Christians, rests on a wide and varied foundation. They are spiritual brethren, for they have a common origin. They are all "the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." They all have "received the adoption of sons;" they all have entered into the kingdom of God, by being "born again, born of the Spirit, born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" born, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." They all have Abraham for their Father. "Being Christ's, they are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise;" and,

[1] Gal. iii. 28. Col. iii. 11. Heb. xii. 9. Acts xvii. 26, 28. Mal. ii. 10.
[2] Matt. xxiii. 8.

as they all are Abraham's spiritual children, they all are also the offspring of mystical Sarah; the patriarchal church under the covenant of promise; "the children, not of the bond woman, but of the free." Ancient Jerusalem, "Jerusalem above," both as to time and place, "is the mother of them all."[1]

They are spiritual brethren, for they have a common character. They all, though in different degrees, resemble their Father in heaven, and their great Elder Brother. They all are "renewed after the image of him that created them," "in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." They all "are conformed to the image of God's Son." They all already bear the spiritual, as they shall all ere long bear the outward image of "the Second Man, the Lord from heaven." They all have "the mind in them that was in him;" they all are "in the world as he was in the world;" his animated images, his "living epistles, known and read of all men."[2]

They are spiritual brethren, for they have a common education. They are all nourished by the "sincere milk of the word." In a higher sense than the Israelitish brethren, who were their prototypes, "they all eat the same spiritual meat, and they all drink the same spiritual drink:" "the flesh of the Son of Man, which is meat indeed; the blood of the Son of Man, which is drink indeed." They all are taught by the same Spirit; taught materially the same truths, so that the differences on vital subjects among true Christians are always rather apparent than real—differences rather about the meaning of words than the truth of principles; and they all are disciplined by the same paternal Providence, for "what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?"[3]

They are spiritual brethren, for they have a common residence. They dwell together in that spiritual "better country," of which Canaan was an emblem, a state of favor and fellowship with God; and in that spiritual house, of which the temple was a type, "the church of the living God." They are "not strangers and foreigners" to one another; they are "fellow-citizens," they belong to the one "household of God;" and they shall all dwell forever in their Father's house of many mansions above; "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."[4]

Finally, they are spiritual brethren, for they have a common inheritance. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." They all are "begotten again to a living hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them."[5]

Such are the brethren who are here referred to. Men brought out of their natural condition of guilt and condemnation, into a state of forgiveness and acceptance; men "transformed" in their characters, "by the renewing of their minds," in the exercise of the same Divine grace, by the operation of the same Divine influence; and thus, by

[1] Gal. iii. 26; iv. 5. John iii. 5, 6; i. 13. 1 Pet. i. 23. Gal. iii. 29; iv. 26.
[2] Col. iii. 10. Rom. viii. 29. Phil. ii. 5. 1 John iv. 17. 2 Cor. iii. 2.
[3] 1 Pet. ii. 1. 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. John vi. 55. Heb. xii. 7.
[4] Eph. ii. 19. Psal. xci. 1. John xiv. 2. 2 Cor. v. 1.
[5] Rom. viii. 17. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

these changes of state and character which are common to them all, materially the same in each, placed in a most intimate endearing relation to each other; with common views and affections, common likings and dislikings, common hopes and fears, common joys and sorrows, a common interest, common friends, common enemies, they are brothers indeed.

Relation and duty are correlative ideas, and the weight of obligation corresponds with the closeness of the connection. Those who are connected together as brethren, must be bound to feel towards one another, and to act towards one another, as brethren. The whole of the duty which one christian brother owes to another christian brother, to all other christian brethren, is that which is here enjoined towards the brotherhood—Love. This duty is clearly described, and powerfully enforced, in the following apostolic injunction: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."[1] Christians are bound to love all men with a love of benevolence; but the love of esteem and complacency which a Christian ought to cherish towards a Christian, is a sentiment very different from this general benevolence; a sentiment of which none but a Christian can be either the object or the subject. This affection originates in the possession of a peculiar mode of thinking and feeling, produced in the mind by the Holy Spirit, through the knowledge and belief of christian truth, which naturally leads those who are thus distinguished to a sympathy of mind and heart, of thought and affection, with all who, under the same influence, have been led to entertain the same views and cherish the same dispositions. It has for its end the highest good, the spiritual improvement and final well-being of its objects, consisting in entire conformity to the mind and will of God, the unclouded sense of the Divine favor, the uninterrupted enjoyment of the Divine fellowship, the being with and like the ever-blessed, Holy, Holy, Holy, One.

This subject, the duty of the brethren to the brethren, individually considered, is a very interesting and important one; but the subject to which our attention is now to be turned, though nearly allied to it, is still a different one,—the love of the brethren to the brotherhood as a body.

The "brotherhood" is the brethren in the associated form, in a social capacity; and it is plainly necessary, in order to our distinctly apprehending the nature and extent of the duty here enjoined, that we clearly perceive what is its object. It is the more necessary that this be attended to, that mistaken apprehension as to what this brotherhood, or, in other words, what the Church of Christ is, has led into very important practical mistakes, and induced men, under the impression that they were loving and honoring the brotherhood, to hate and persecute the brethren. Men have often thought they were showing their regard to the Church by maltreating its true members.

It is impossible to read the New Testament carefully, without per-

[1] Pet. i. 22, 23.

ceiving that it is the intention of Jesus Christ, not only to render his followers individually holy and happy, as so many distinct children of God; but, in subordination to this end, to form them into a happy, holy fellowship, the bond of which should be the faith and love of the same truth, and the objects of which should be the united worship of their common God and Father, the united promotion of the honor and interests of their common Lord and Saviour, and their mutual improvement in the knowledge of christian truth, the cultivation of christian dispositions, the performance of christian duty, and the enjoyment and diffusion of christian happiness. This society, founded on Christ's institution, subject to his authority, regulated by his law, animated by his Spirit, devoted to his honor, and blessed by his presence, is the christian Church. This is the brotherhood. None ought to be admitted into, or retained in this society, but those who, by an intelligent, consistent profession of the faith of the gospel, give evidence that they are brethren; and all who are brethren should readily join themselves to, and be readily welcomed by, the brotherhood.

This society, though one in its principles and objects, was necessarily from the beginning divided into separate associations, composed of the brethren residing in the same immediate vicinity, meeting together for the common observance of the christian ordinances. These associations considered themselves each as a component part of the great brotherhood, "the Holy Catholic Church," "all who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus." The members of one of these brotherhoods were viewed, of course, as members of the great brotherhood, and were recognized as such by being readily admitted into fellowship in all the offices of religion by other christian societies in other localities, on producing a satisfactory letter of attestation from the society with which they were more immediately connected.[1]

Nor was this all. In joining the christian brotherhood they connected themselves not only with the whole of the brethren on earth, but also with those who had finished their course, and had been admitted into the mansions of celestial purity and rest. They joined the great "family in heaven and in earth called by the one name;" they "sat down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father;" they came to "an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, to the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to the spirits of the just made perfect."[2]

There are various important truths respecting the Church of Christ, suggested by its being termed a brotherhood, especially the two following, which I shall merely notice in passing. First, none but brethren ought to be admitted to be its members: an ungodly man is fully as much out of his place in a christian Church, as Satan was

[1] Rom. xvi. 1. 3 John 8, 9. "When a Christian entered a foreign city, his first inquiry was for the church (the brotherhood); and here he was received as a brother, and supplied with whatever could contribute to his spiritual or bodily refreshment. The church letters, which were as *tesserœ hospitales*, received the name of γράμματα τετυπωμένα, *Epistolæ formatæ*, because, to guard against counterfeits, they were drawn up after a certain form, τύπος; and also γράμματα κοινωνικὰ, *Epistolæ communicatoriæ*, inasmuch as they indicated that the bearers were in the fellowship of the church."—EUSEB. iv. 23. CYPRIAN, Epist. iii.—NEANDER, vol. i. sect. ii. p. 280.

[2] Eph. iii. 15. Matt. viii. 11. Heb. xii. 22, 23.

when he presented himself among the sons of God; and, secondly, there must be no tyrannical rule in the Church of Christ. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; but ye shall not be so. Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."[1]

This goodly fellowship, this noble brotherhood, was not only in its elements, but in its social capacity, its organized form, the fit object of the respectful ardent attachment of each of its members; and this respectful affectionate attachment was to be manifested in a corresponding course of conduct. Every Christian had a duty to discharge, the sum of which was, love to the christian brotherhood with which he was connected, and to the whole christian brotherhood, both on earth and in heaven; and it is to this, we apprehend, that the apostle refers, when, in the words before us, he calls on Christians to "love the brotherhood."

The christian Church does not now, alas! exhibit, as it did in the primitive age, the appearance of one unbroken brotherhood. There are many societies who call themselves churches, and who sometimes take to themselves the name, as, if not their exclusive property, at least belonging to them with some peculiar emphasis of meaning, in whom we can scarcely trace the slightest identifying marks of the ancient christian brotherhoods; though even among the adherents of these, we find not a few whom we gladly recognize as "faithful and beloved brethren in Christ Jesus." Here we have brethren, but not a brotherhood. In other cases, we find both brethren and a brotherhood; but, in too many instances, we have to regret that additional humanly-devised bonds have been added to the divinely-appointed simple silken ties of primitive fellowship, and that, by attempting to carry union in opinion and uniformity of usage, farther than the great Master warrants, they have hazarded the continuance of union within, and prevented the recognition of other christian brethren and other christian brotherhoods, who are determined to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free," and to count all terms of fellowship not of his establishing, but various forms of "the yoke of bondage."[2]

Still, however, there are, under a very considerable variety of external form, many religious societies which, with all their defects and faults (and none of them want these), are, in their elementary principles, indeed christian brotherhoods; and these christian brotherhoods, substantially united, though in many respects different from, and in some even opposed to, one another, along with those individual christian brethren who are, in too great numbers, to be found in connection with societies which are secular and anti-christian in their constitution, form the whole christian brotherhood now on earth.

§ 2.—*Of the Christian's duty to the brotherhood.*

Now, in this department of the discourse, my object is briefly to inquire what is the duty of the individual christian brother to this

[1] Luke xxii. 25. [2] Gal. v. 1.

brotherhood, both towards that one of its minor divisions with which he may be more immediately connected, and towards the whole brotherhood, the whole collection of christian churches and christian individuals whom he can recognize as forming the visible holy family, the children of God, the brethren of Jesus Christ, "the Holy Catholic Church."

Let it not be forgotten, that it is the duty of a brother towards the brotherhood that I am inquiring into. It is the duty of every one who is not a brother to become a brother, of every man who is not a Christian to become a Christian; but, till he does so, he had better not seek admission into the brotherhood. What has he who is not a brother to do there? It is a happy thing for all parties concerned, when "believers are added to the Church, multitudes both of men and women," and when "of the rest," the unbelieving remainder, "none dares to join himself to them." [1]

The first way in which a christian brother is to show his love for the brotherhood, as an institution or society, is by joining himself to it; and, in order to do this, he must connect himself with some particular christian brotherhood. It is in this way he forms a visible connection with the whole visible brotherhood. There are some good men who seem to be fond of being Christians at large, connected with the whole society invisibly, but visibly with no individual society. The sectarianism and impurity which are to be found, more or less, in all existing christian churches, afford but too plausible an excuse, but they afford no sufficient reason, for this course. Of the great ends to be gained by connection with the christian brotherhood, some cannot be gained at all, none of them gained in a high degree, without joining the fellowship of some particular church; and it is plain that, if all Christians were taking the same liberty as those privileged persons, there would be no such thing as a visible church on earth. As soon as Saul came to Jerusalem, "he essayed to join himself to the disciples." Both his eagerness and their caution are full of instructive example. They were backward to receive him, because "they doubted whether he was a disciple." And equally worthy of imitation are the conduct of Barnabas, who "took him and brought him to the apostles," and their ready reception of him on Barnabas' testimony, so that "he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem." [2]

Having shown his love to the brotherhood, by joining himself to it, the christian brother is to give further proof of his love to it after he has become one of its members. He is to be regular in attending on all its meetings for the observance of ordinances. He is not to "forsake the assembling together, as the manner of some is;" he is to "continue steadfastly in the apostolic doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." All the members of the brotherhood are to show their love, by performing the duties belonging to the place they hold in the society. They are cheerfully to contribute of their time, and labor, and property, for gaining the great objects of the brotherhood, both within and without its pale; the overseers, by "watching for souls as those who must give ac-

[1] Acts v. 13, 14. [2] Acts ix. 26, 27.

count;" the members, by "obeying them that have the rule over them;" "the younger," by obedience to the elder; and the whole body, by "submitting to each other in the fear of God." "He that ministers, must wait on his ministering; he that teacheth, on teaching; he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, must do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." "He who is taught the Word is to communicate to them who teach in all good things." The statute "which the Lord has ordained" must be observed, "that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel;" and they who, "for Christ's sake, go forth, asking nothing of the Gentiles," ought, by the other members of the society, to be "brought forward on their journey after a godly sort." Love to the brotherhood is thus to be shown by contributing to the maintenance of those ordinances, by which the highest interests of the society are promoted, and by which it is enabled to perform one of its principal duties, in "holding forth the word of life" to a world perishing for lack of knowledge.[1]

Another way in which the christian brother is to show his love to the brotherhood, is by endeavoring to preserve its purity. The introduction of corrupt members into the Church of Christ, is not only great cruelty to the individuals immediately concerned, but it is inflicting a most severe injury on the brotherhood. It is in reference to this crime—for it is no less—that the apostle says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." An unchristian man can do no good, he must do mischief in a christian church. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump."[2]

It is peculiarly the duty of official Christians, elders, and pastors, to show their love to the brotherhood by a careful attention to this matter. To them the command is given, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth" on the foundation. A christian brotherhood will serve its peculiar purposes, both internal and external, just in proportion to its purity. A small christian society, composed of right materials, will be far more powerful in doing good, than a large christian society where the materials are of an inferior kind. It should, then, be the constant care of the rulers of every christian brotherhood to admit none but those who appear to be Christians, and to retain none after they have proved themselves not to be Christians. But this will be, this can be, but very imperfectly done, if the members of the society generally do not give their assistance to the overseers or bishops, by watching for one another's souls, "looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness spring up and trouble the brotherhood, and thereby many be defiled." That man does not love the brotherhood, who does not conscientiously attend to our Lord's directions in the 18th chapter of the gospel by Matthew, for the removal of offences.[3]

Still further, the brother is to show his love of the brotherhood by seeking its peace. No society can well gain its object whose members are at variance with one another; and, when the nature and

[1] Heb. x. 25. Acts ii. 42. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Pet. v. 5. Eph. v. 21. Rom. xii. 7, 8. Gal. vi. 6. 1 Cor. ix. 14. 3 John 6, 7. Phil. ii. 16.

[2] 1 Cor. iii. 17; v. 6.

[3] 1 Cor. iii. 10. Matt. xviii. 15–20.

designs of the christian brotherhood are considered, it must be plain, that to *its* prosperity peace is of peculiar importance. The things which make for peace are the things which edify the brotherhood. He who loves the brotherhood intelligently, will study "to be quiet, and to do his own business," for he knows that the way to secure peace in any society is for every member to do his own business; and there is not a more certain likelihood of producing discord than for men to neglect their own business, and become "busybodies in other men's matters." He will not, like Diotrephes, "love," and seek to have "the pre-eminence;" but "by love serve his brethren." He will "avoid foolish questions, which gender strife rather than godly edifying." He will "leave off contention before it be meddled with;" and he will "mark those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which he has learned, and avoid them." He will be found a steadfast upholder of the three great laws of the brotherhood, on which its peace so much depends—"Let all things be done in charity," "let all things be done to edifying," "let all things be done decently and in order." [1]

In the next place, the brother is to show his love of the brotherhood by seeking its increase. Brethren die; but the brotherhood is immortal. It is the part of a good church-member to exert himself to have the breaches made by death and otherwise repaired, and to prepare for the blank which his own removal is soon to make. This is not to be done by robbing other churches, by seeking to thin the ranks of some other brotherhood. There is something very unseemly in the proselytizing spirit which distinguishes too many christian sects, and which marks them as sects indeed. If a member of one christian brotherhood seek admission into another, bringing satisfactory evidence that he is a brother, he is not to be refused; nor is christian liberty even to seem to be trenched on by inquisitorial investigation—either on the part of the church left or the church joined—into the reasons which, he says, are satisfactory to his own conscience for the change; but it is not the natural order of things to gather churches out of churches. Little is gained, and often much is lost in this way.

Churches should be kept up by conversion rather than by proselytism; and the love of the brotherhood is a principle which operates in entire harmony with the love of souls, in seeking to turn men from the error of their ways, that it may be said of them, "Ye were as sheep going astray; but ye are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." Every converted man should endeavor to bring as many of the prodigal children home to his Father's house as possible, that there may be joy in the brotherhood on earth as in heaven, that "those who were dead have become alive again, and those who were lost are found." [2] The member of a christian church who, in this way, is the means of adding even one member of the right kind to its communion, is a real and great benefactor both to the individual and to the community, both to the brother and to the brotherhood.

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 11. 1 Pet. iv. 15. 3 John 9. Gal. v. 13. 2 Tim. ii. 23. Tit. iii. 9. Prov. xvii. 14. Rom. xvi. 17. 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 26, 40.

[2] 1 Pet. iii. 25. Luke xv. 32.

Finally, the christian brother is to show his love to the brotherhood he is immediately connected with, by making its welfare, in all the extent of meaning belonging to that word, the subject of his frequent and fervent prayers. This was one of the ways in which the apostle Paul, who had a great deal of the love of the brethren, as well as of love to all men, expressed his affection for the brotherhoods with which he was peculiarly connected. "Without ceasing he made mention of them always in his prayers, for the grace of God to them, that they might in everything be enriched by him, and come behind in no gift; and that they might be perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment." We, my brethren, should imitate his example, and, like him, when we "bow our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," we should bear on our hearts the brotherhood; and pray that it may be made and preserved free, and pure, and peaceful, and active, and prosperous, that "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, may make increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." [1] It is thus that the christian brother is to love the brotherhood, of which he is a member.

But he is never to forget that that brotherhood, ay, that that class of brotherhoods, however numerous, with which it may be connected in ecclesiastical arrangement, is but a very small portion of the great christian brotherhood, consisting as it does of all the associations which, whatever be their differences and faults, deserve the name of christian churches, being collections of men honestly associated from a regard to Christ's authority, founded on the faith of his gospel, to observe his ordinances; and of all true believers, though they may not be in christian fellowship, properly so called, whether standing aloof from all the sections of christian churches, or connected with societies which we cannot recognize as christian churches: and with regard to all these portions of "the household of faith," he is to love them, and "do good to them as he has opportunity." [2]

One of the best ways of showing love to the whole brotherhood, is by a careful discharge of our duty to the particular brotherhood we are connected with. We shall do more, I believe, towards having our neighbors' vineyards well kept by keeping our own well, by making it quite a pattern vineyard for order, and freedom from weeds, and fruitfulness, than by leaving our own vineyard untended, and occupying our time in pointing out their neglects and faults, thus ultroneously assuming the office of "keepers of other men's vineyards." It is impossible to say how extensively beneficial might be the influence of a single congregation, however small, all the members of which set themselves to do all that lies in their power, according to the stations they bear in it, that, in the quiet working of Christ's simple machinery, their brotherhood should do all the good possible within and without its pale. This, however, is by no means to interfere—it will not—with every legitimate means of obtaining freedom

[1] 1 Cor. i. 4, &c. Eph. ii. 14; iv. 16. [2] Gal. vi. 10.

and purity, both as to doctrine and communion and order for the whole brotherhood, and for breaking down "middle walls of partition," and hastening onward the fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer, in that visible union of his genuine followers, which will come on the world with the force of a demonstration that the Father hath sent his Son.[1]

The duty of every brother to the whole brotherhood on earth, cannot be more succinctly and accurately stated than in the well-considered words of the Westminster Assembly: "All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his spirit and by faith, are united to one another in love, have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God; and in performing such spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification, as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities; which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus."[2]

It is plain that the Westminster divines never contemplated anything similar to what has long existed in this country: different bodies of christian churches holding the same doctrines, observing the same ordinances, and following the same order, occupying the same territorial region, yet living as distinct, so far as ecclesiastical communion is concerned, as if their creeds were contradictory, their institutions different, and their modes of government incompatible. Such an unnatural state of things does not seem to have entered into their minds. Their remarks refer to sister churches situated in different countries, or organized on different platforms, or to individual members of such sister churches. But, *a fortiori*, on the principles so well stated in the paragraph just quoted, churches in the circumstances described are bound not only to occasional communion and friendly co-operation, but to entire union, to ecclesiastical incorporation.[3]

With regard to the duties of christian brethren and christian brotherhoods to other christian brotherhoods, with whom circumstances may prevent complete union, I beg briefly to observe, that it is the obvious duty of every christian brother to love not only his own brotherhood, or rather his corner of the one great brotherhood; but, without being blind to defects and faults, to cherish affectionate, respectful sentiments towards all christian churches who hold the Head, and habitually to express these sentiments in fervent supplication to our One—common—Father, in the name of our One—common—Mediator, and under the influence of the One—common—Spirit, and, as occasion offers, gladly to embrace opportunities of promoting their internal improvement and outward prosperity; and what is true of christian brethren is equally true of christian brotherhoods. Especially should we use every means in our power towards the realization of that wide enlargement of the brotherhood, which prophecy

[1] John xvii. 23. [2] Westminst. Conf., ch. xxvi. § 1, 2. [3] See note B.

leads us to anticipate as drawing near in these later ages of the world, when "all the ends of the earth are to remember, and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the people to worship before him;" when "the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation;" when "the handful of corn sown on the top of the mountains shall shake like Lebanon;" when the mother of us all shall "enlarge the place of her tent, and stretch forth the curtain of her habitation: whom she shall not spare, but lengthen her cords, and strengthen her stakes; for she shall break forth on the right hand and the left; and her seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited;" when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." Every lover of the brotherhood should express his love by adopting this resolution and acting it out: "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." "Peace be within thy walls, prosperity be within thy palaces." "God be merciful to us, and bless us; and cause thy face to shine on us. That thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee." [1]

It only remains, on this part of the subject, that I say a word or two as to the love which we should cherish towards that part of the great brotherhood who are not on earth, but in heaven, and the manner in which we should express this love:—

> "One family we dwell in him,
> One church above, beneath,
> Though now divided by the stream,
> The narrow stream of death." [2]

The stroke of mortality has broken many a strong and tender band; but it has not broken, it could not break, the band which binds christian brother to christian brother. We have no reason to think our brethren on high have forgotten us, or have ceased to love us. We know we have not forgotten them, nor ceased to love them. They stand in no need of our offices of kindness; they are beyond the reach of imperfection, and want, and suffering; but they are the proper objects of a very tender and ardent affection—an affection which has more of the purity of heaven, and the permanence of eternity, than any other affection which has a fellow-creature for its object. That affection is surely not one that must live in the heart without ever finding appropriate expression in this world. Our love to our brethren in heaven, is to be shown in our giving thanks to Him who loves them and us, for making them "more than conquerors;" in keeping steadily in our mind's eye all that was excellent in their character and conduct, both for model and for motive; in giving "all diligence, to the full assurance of hope, that we may not be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises;" in maintain-

[1] Psal. xxii. 27. Isa. lx. 22. Psal. lxxii. 16. Isa. liv. 2. Rev. xi. 15. Isa. lxii. 1. Psal. cxxii. 6, 7; lxvii. 1–3.

[2] Ch. Wesley.

ing steadfastly that good cause which was dearer to them than life when here, and which we know is dearer to them now than ever; and in often practising the first notes of the ever new anthem, which, as sung by them, and to be sung by us, shall "everlastingly echo in heaven:" "Unto Him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in his blood. Salvation to our God and the Lamb forever and ever."[1]

These remarks have been entirely addressed to the brethren. They alone could relish them; they alone, indeed, could fully understand them. But is there any one here uninterested in them? Not one. "Strangers, foreigners, aliens, from the commonwealth of Israel," from "the household of faith," there may be here; but every one of these must become "brethren," else they are undone forever, for there is no salvation but by union to the Saviour—"the first-born among the many brethren." We dare not say to such persons, make a profession of brotherhood. No; in your present circumstances this were but to accumulate guilt, to increase danger, to aggravate damnation. But we do say, become brothers. The brethren with one voice of invitation say, "We were once like you, 'far off;'" but we have been "brought nigh." You, too, may be brought nigh by that all-attractive blood of Jesus' cross. Are you very guilty, very depraved, very wretched? So were some of us; ay, so were all of us, but "we have been washed, we have been sanctified, we have been justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." His blood is as efficacious, his Spirit as free, as ever. Oh, come to him, and then come to us! Give yourselves to him, and then give yourselves to us by his will. Come to him; he will put you among the brethren; he will not be ashamed to call you brethren; he will give you the brother's inheritance, the goodly land. Come to us, we will do you good; we will love you as brethren, and you will love us as brethren; we will strengthen one another's hands, and comfort one another's hearts; and move onwards and upwards, till we, one by one, join the goodly fellowship in heaven. And when God has filled up the number of his chosen ones, a number which no man can number, then shall the completed holy brotherhood be presented by their Elder Brother, "a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," to his Father and their Father, his God and their God, "with exceeding joy," to dwell forever in "his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore." There will be no need, then, to press the exhortation, "Love the brotherhood." They will all of them be thoroughly "taught of God to love one another." "Come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."[2]

III.—CHRISTIANS ARE TO "FEAR GOD."

Let us now, in the third place, turn our attention to the account here given us of our duty to God—we are to FEAR him: that is, we are to cherish an awful sense of his infinite grandeur and excellence, corresponding to the revelation he has made of these in his works and

[1] Heb. vi. 11, 12. Rev. i. 5, 6. Ἀγαπῶντι, not ἀγαπήσαντι, is the true reading.
[2] Numb. x. 29–32.

word, inducing a conviction that his favor is the greatest of all blessings, and his disapprobation the greatest of all evils, and manifesting itself in leading us practically to seek his favor as the chief good we can enjoy, and avoid his disapprobation as the most tremendous evil we can be subjected to. Such is the fear which the christian man ought to cherish and manifest towards God.

The foundation of this fear of God is in God himself. The only way in which we can apprehend what this fear is, and why we should cherish it, is by turning our minds to the contemplation of the venerable excellences of the Divine character; and if we do distinctly perceive the truth and its evidence on this subject, not only will there be lodged in our understandings and consciences a conviction that we ought to fear God; that this is the first and highest requirement of reason as well as of revelation; but the sentiment will lay hold of our heart, and obtain a place in our affections, corresponding to our apprehensions of the truth and its evidence.

Everything about God is fitted to fill the mind with awe, and it would seem as if nothing short of insanity could prevent any being possessed of reason and affection from habitually feeling the sentiment of supreme veneration for Him. He is the inexhausted, inexhaustible fountain, of all the being, all the life, all the intelligence, all the power, all the activity, all the excellence, all the happiness in the universe. He is "the first and the last, and the living One;" "from everlasting to everlasting;" immense, "filling heaven and earth with his presence," "a God at hand, a God afar off;" unchanged, unchangeable, "without variableness or shadow of turning," "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever:" Infinite in power, having called into existence myriads of worlds, capable of calling into existence myriads more; upholding all these worlds, himself upheld by none; controlling all things, himself uncontrolled; "doing according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth:" Infinite in knowledge: "known to him are all his works from the beginning of the world;" [1] "every creature is manifest in his sight;" "all things are naked and open in his eyes;" "hell itself is naked before him, and destruction has no covering:" Infinite in wisdom, "wonderful in counsel," as well as "excellent in working," "wise in heart," as well as "mighty in strength;" his "judgments are unsearchable, his ways past finding out:" Infinite in holiness; "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and he cannot look on sin;" the "Holy, Holy, Holy" One: Infinite in righteousness: "he is the Rock, his work is perfect; all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he;" "far be it from him, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should do iniquity, for the work of a man shall he render to him, and cause him to receive according to his ways; yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." [2] The benignity of the Divine Being may seem a quality fitted to excite love rather than fear, yet are there two qualities of it: its immeasurable extent, and its immaculately holy character, which

[1] See note C.

[2] Rev. i. 17, 18. Psal. xc. 2. Jer. xxiii. 24. James i. 17. Dan. iv. 35. Acts xv. 13. Heb. iv. 13. Job xxvi. 6. Isa. xxvii. 29. Job ix. 4. Rom. xi. 33. Hab. i. 13. Isa. vi. 3. Deut. xxxii. 4. Job. xxxiv. 10.

are well fitted to deepen the impression of awe produced by his eternal, infinite, immutable power, and wisdom, and rectitude. "There is mercy with him and plenteous redemption;" but the mercy that is with *him*, is mercy which leads men to fear him.[1] Such is the truth, stated in the plainest, most unadorned language, respecting God. But "how small a portion is heard," or can be heard "of him!" "Who can by searching find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is higher than heaven; what can we do? deeper than hell; what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."[2] When we have strained our faculties to the utmost, in conceiving of grandeur and excellence, we are still at an immeasurable distance from the grandeur and the excellence which have made his infinite nature their eternal dwelling-place.

His is the greatness: and the most exalted of his creatures, his whole creation, is before him less than a drop to the ocean, than an atom to the universe of matter, "less than nothing and vanity." His is the power: and all created might is in his hand, to be exerted, directed, restrained, and resumed, at his pleasure. His is the glory: and all created splendor, in his presence, fades into obscurity, and vanishes into nothing. His is the victory: in all his purposes he ever is the overcomer; and all victories gained by his creatures are won by power derived from him. His is the majesty: and all the potentates of the earth before him are contemptible worms, and their loftiest thrones are not worthy to be his footstool. All that is in the heavens and the earth is his; he is the maker, preserver, governor, supreme and sole proprietor of the universe, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things. His is the kingdom: unbounded dominion belongs to him; his reign stretches throughout immensity, and eternity; and all powers and authorities, in all worlds, are under his feet. And all this physical and intellectual greatness, this infinity of power, and wisdom, and dominion, is heightened by corresponding moral grandeur. His is a purity before which the holiness of angels waxes dim: His a righteousness, of the stability of which the everlasting mountains is a faint figure: His a benignity, of which all the kindness in the hearts of men and angels is but a shadow.

Surely this being is worthy to be feared; surely he is the meet object of the supreme esteem, and reverence, and love of all intelligent beings; surely, to be the objects of his approbation, and love, and care, is the highest honor and happiness of such creatures; to be the objects of his disapprobation, is the deepest disgrace and misery that can befal them; and of course, to seek his approbation, in conformity of mind and will to him, is their highest wisdom and duty.

Such are the convictions and feelings of the unfallen and restored, the angelic and human, inhabitants of the celestial world. Their unceasing hymn is, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, great and marvellous are thy works, just and true are thy ways; who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name? Thou, Thou only, art holy." And this enlightened, affectionate sense of the infinite grandeur and excellence of God, is in their minds a principle of supreme allegiance to his holy government, rendering it morally impossible that they

[1] Psal. cxxx. 4, 7. [2] Job xi. 7.

should disregard his authority, or seek their happiness in anything but in union of mind and will and enjoyment with him.

Had sin never been introduced into the universe, this would have been the only kind of fear of God that ever would have existed. It would have been a fear without torment. The same excellences which produced awe would have produced confidence and love. All would have feared God; none would have been afraid of him. Indeed, fear, in the sense of the anticipation of evil, would have had no being; it would have had no object; for evil was an impossibility under his government while his intelligent creatures retained their allegiance.

But sin has been introduced into the world; and, from the very excellence of the Divine character, God appears as the hater of sin and the punisher of sinners, and, of course, an object of fear or terror to them, as even imagination cannot grasp the miseries which may be expected from infinite wisdom and power employed as the agents of incensed justice. He has inflicted severe and numerous evils both on sinning men and angels; and he has threatened to inflict still more dreadful evils on them. He has "cast the angels who kept not their first abode, down out of heaven into hell," and "reserved them under chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day," when they shall be doomed to everlasting punishment in the lake that burneth with fire unquenchable, prepared for them. He has visited the sin of man with many and varied tokens of his displeasure. Death has entered into the world, and passed upon all men; and the declarations of his faithful word are, "The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth shall die. God will turn the wicked into hell. There is no peace to the wicked. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord will not at all acquit the wicked. Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. In the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgments of God, he will render to every man according to his deeds; to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Who can hear these faithful sayings without exclaiming, "Thou, even thou, art He who is to be feared; and who can stand before thee when once thou art angry?" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."[1]

It is obvious, then, that God has become the object of fear to sinful intelligent creatures, in a sense altogether different from that in which he would have forever continued to have been an object of fear to them had they remained in innocence. To the sinning angels, for whom no salvation has been provided, and who know that no salvation is provided for them, every one of those perfections which, in their own nature, are fitted to produce holy awe, is a source of unmixed terror, as all of them go to enhance the security, the severity,

[1] 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6. Rom. vi. 23. Ezek. xviii. 4. Psal. ix. 17. Isa. lvii. 21. Nahum i. 2, 3. Rom. ii. 6, 8, 9. Psal. lxxvi. 7. Heb. x. 31.

and the duration of their misery. They have nothing to expect from God but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment," and then everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power;" and but for the sovereign mercy of God, he must have been to all sinning men, equally as to all sinning angels, thus an object of this fear that has torment.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he has loved" man, has formed and executed a plan of deliverance from the tremendous evils to which he has exposed himself by sin; and he has done this in a way which places in a stronger point of light his hatred of sin, than the infliction of eternal punishment on the whole sinning race would have done. He has made to meet on his incarnate Son the iniquities of us all. Exaction has been made, and he has answered it. He has been wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and has undergone the chastisement of our peace. He has borne our sins in his own body on the tree; he has given himself for us, the just in the room of the unjust. God, in the word of the truth of the gospel, has set Him forth a propitiation in his blood, declaring his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past through his forbearance, declaring his righteousness that he is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus; and he has committed to men the ministry of reconciliation, sending them forth to proclaim, "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses; seeing he has made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the Son of man lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life. God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but to save the world."[1] Every human being who credits this faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, obtains a personal interest in the christian salvation, and is secured of all its blessings.

While the sinner continues unbelieving, he is exposed to all the evils denounced against sin; and in the degree in which he becomes aware of his situation, previously to his embracing the gospel, must be the subject of that fear of God, that dread of his righteous vengeance, which is the habitual sentiment of devils. This emotion, which is just a consciousness of having merited the displeasure of God, a realization of the danger of suffering from his hand the punishment of their sins, plainly possesses no moral excellence, though to a certain extent it may check open sin, and may be overruled by the good Spirit for urging men to look around for deliverance, and to flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. It is as plainly a sentiment which the faith of the gospel, in the degree in which it prevails, banishes from the heart. "Faith worketh by love;" and the love which faith works "casts out" *this* "fear."

But while the faith of the gospel casts out this fear, it produces that fear which is enjoined in the text, and which is one of the leading principles of christian obedience. The grandeur of the Divine

[1] 2 Cor. v. 19–21. John iii. 14–17.

character is more strikingly manifested in those Divine dispensations, the incarnation and sacrifice of the Only-Begotten, by which the salvation of sinners is made consistent with, and illustrative of, the Divine holiness and righteousness, and a statement of which form the gospel message, than in all the other works of God. Nothing is so well fitted to put the fear of God, which will preserve men from offending him, into the heart, as an enlightened view of the cross of Christ. "There shine spotless holiness, inflexible justice, incomprehensible wisdom, omnipotent power, holy love. None of these excellences darken or eclipse the other, but every one of them rather gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine with united eternal splendor: the just Judge, the merciful Father, the wise Governor. Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound."[1]

These views of the character of God naturally and necessarily produce an awful sense of his infinite excellence, and a holy fear of offending him. They lodge deep in the heart the conviction, that it is "an evil thing and a bitter to sin against him." It appears to the mind, under the influence of this principle, absolute madness to do what is opposed to the will of him who is infinitely wise, and righteous, and good; and thus to lose the sense of his approbation, and to expose ourselves to his rebukes and chastisements, in order to obtain any good which man can bestow, or to avoid any evil which man can inflict.

This fear of God, which is to be obtained by contemplating these displays of the Divine character, is to be manifested in carefully avoiding whatever is opposed to his will, whether in the way of neglecting to do what he has commanded, or doing what he has forbidden, and in keeping out of the way of temptation, and abstaining even from the appearance of evil. This fear of God ought to be the habitual disposition of our hearts. We should "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" and we should never forget, that the only satisfactory proof that God has put his fear in our heart, is to be found in our not departing from him. The best evidence we can afford that we fear the Lord, is our delighting greatly in his commandments; our perfecting holiness, in cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit by the fear of God. Such is the Christian's duty to his Supreme Ruler: to fear him; to act as if we considered his authority to be supreme; no blessing to be compared with his approbation; no evil to be compared with his displeasure. Thus shall we find, that "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."[2]

Nothing can be more reasonable, more worthy of a rational being, than compliance with this command; nothing more unreasonable than neglect or violation of it. Well may we say with Nehemiah, "Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God?" or with Jeremiah, "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: O foolish people, and without understanding. Will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail;

[1] Maclaurin. [2] See note D.

though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might." Or, in the words of our Master who is in heaven, "Be not afraid of them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, who after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." Or, in the words of his angel, "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is coming." Let us then habitually fear "that great and dreadful name, the Lord our God;" let us "feel the force of his almightiness;"[1] let us fear, that so we may not come short of the rest, a promise of entering into which has been left us; "let us have grace, to worship God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."[2]

IV.—CHRISTIANS ARE TO "HONOR THE KING."

Let us now proceed to make a few remarks on our duty as Christians to our subordinate ruler, the civil magistrate. While we "fear God," we are to "honor the king." "The king" is here to be considered as an expression just equivalent to the civil magistrate. The command is, 'Pay a proper respect to every person who is invested with civil authority, especially to those who are at the head of the government.' The honor here referred to, is that which is due to the office, whatever may be the personal character of him who fills it; the respect due to the magistrate, when acting as a magistrate. When the magistrate is personally possessed of those qualities which are the proper objects of respect; when he is a man distinguished for his wisdom, piety, prudence, justice, and benevolence—he is to be honored for these, and honored the more because he is a magistrate, as high station abounds with temptation, and he who in such trying circumstances acquits himself well, is worthy of peculiar respect; but whatever be his personal character, though he may be an irreligious and immoral man in his private capacity, which is always to be regretted, especially as it is apt to bring the magistracy into contempt, we are to respect him in his official capacity, and to honor him while he performs the functions of a public ruler. Christians must keep far away from the behavior of those whom the apostle in his second epistle describes as "presumptuous and self-willed, who despise governments, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."

The honor which we are to cherish for the magistrate is to be manifested chiefly in our conscientious and cheerful obedience to all his lawful commands. We are bound to disobey him if he commands us to do anything which is forbidden by the law of God; and we are not bound to obey him if he lays on us commands unwarranted by the constitution and laws of the country; but, with these exceptions, we are to be "subject to the higher powers." We are not to think, that if we are obedient in some points we may venture to be disobedient in others. We are to obey all lawful commands; for all rest on

[1] Jeremy Taylor.
[2] Neh. v. 9. Jer. x. 7. Luke xii. 4, 5. Rev. xiv. 7. Heb. xii. 28.

the same authority. Whosoever keepeth the whole law, with the exception of offending in one point, is guilty of all; guilty of despising the authority of the whole law, guilty of failing in his duty as a good subject. It is the less necessary that I dwell on this subject, as not long ago I had an opportunity of discussing it at full length when illustrating the 13th and 14th verses of this chapter: "Submit yourselves, for the Lord's sake, to every human ordinance for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or to governors, as to them who are sent by him."

It will be proper, before concluding, that I in a few words point out the connection between the two precepts, "Fear God; Honor the king." The connection is twofold. The first precept is at once the foundation and the limit of the second.[1]

It is its foundation. The loyalty of a christian man rests on a regard to the Divine authority. He honors the king because he fears God. There are many who, in their obedience to civil authority, are influenced entirely by reasons of expediency. They are "subject, not for conscience but for wrath's sake." They obey, because otherwise they would be punished; and they show this by violating law without scruple, when they think this can be done with advantage or impunity. There are others who obey because they consider it right to obey: but in their notion of what is right, they have little or no reference to a recognition of Divine authority. Their obedience has nothing of the character of a religious duty: they obey the magistrate as they pay their debts: they think both right; but in both cases "God is not in all their thoughts."

The enlightened, consistent Christian recognizes civil government as a Divine ordinance. He believes the doctrine laid down by the apostle, that "there is no power but of God, that the powers that be are ordained of God, and that whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." He believes that the magistrate is "a minister of God to him for good," and acts accordingly, being "subject for conscience' sake." He recognizes the authority of God in these commands, "Fear the Lord and the King. Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. Be subject to principalities and powers. Obey magistrates; submit to every human institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well, for the Lord's sake." With him, obedience is not a matter of human arrangement, of expediency, of interest, or even of mere moral right; it is a religious duty.

This secures a uniformity of obedience which nothing else can do, and, therefore, there is no class of subjects who may be so safely relied on for consistent loyalty as enlightened Christians. They obey the magistrates because God commands them to do so, and perform their civil duties as "doing service to the Lord." What Nehemiah says of himself, in reference to certain practices of his predecessors in the government, a christian man may say of himself, in reference

[1] "'Giving to God what is God's' not only affords the basis, but also fixes the just limitations of the civil obligations growing out of relations brought about by Divine Providence."—NEANDER.

to the practice of eluding civil duties and evading civil taxes, in which many who, it may be, pride themselves on their loyalty, do not scruple to indulge when they can do it safely: "so did not I, because of the fear of God."

But as the precept, "fear God," is with a Christian the foundation of his civil obedience, so it is also its limit. A Christian should honor the king so far, and only so far, as this is consistent with fearing God. Should the civil magistrate require us to do anything that is inconsistent with the Divine law; should he require us to neglect what God has commanded, or to do what God has forbidden—we must fear God, and not honor the king, if such obedience is to be accounted honor. The principle on which we are to act in such cases is a very plain one: "We ought to obey God rather than man;" and, whatever the consequences may be, it must be acted on; and he who really fears God will rise above the fear of man. Fearing God, he will know no other fear.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, honored the king by a faithful discharge of their duties as superintendents of the province of Babylon; but when he commanded them to worship the colossal image he had erected in the plain of Dura, with the assurance that if they did not, they should be cast into a burning fiery furnace; fearing God, they were "not afraid of the king's commandment;" but respectfully, yet determinedly, said, "Be it known to thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Daniel, on prayer being prohibited by the edict of a monarch whom he most faithfully served, disregarded the edict, and took good care that this should be no secret. "When he knew that the writing was signed, he went to his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." The very apostle who says, "Be subject for the Lord's sake, to every ordinance of man," when the Jewish magistrates commanded him and John "to speak no more in the name of Jesus," replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than to God, judge ye:" and when called to account for acting out this principle, his answer was, "We ought to obey God rather than man."

It seems a common notion that I am bound to obey the law just because it is the law; and if what the law requires be a wrong thing, the magistrate, not I, must be answerable for it. But neither Scripture nor reason sanctions such a transfer of moral responsibility. "Every man must give account of HIMSELF to God." Most certainly I am bound to obey the law of the land because it is the law of the land; but only so far as obedience to that law does not necessarily imply disobedience to the law of God: no farther. "Honor the king" must always be subordinate to "fear God:"

> "Let Cæsar's dues be ever paid
> To Cæsar and his throne;
> But consciences and souls were made
> To be the Lord's alone." [1]

[1] Watts. "Sic honorandus Rex, ut ne contra Deum peccemus."—CHRYSOSTOM, in Matt. Hom. lxxi.

I have thus finished the illustration of the apostle's account of the condition and duty of Christians. It may serve a good purpose, before taking leave of the subject, to present you with a general outline of the statements which have been made.

The condition of Christians is, at once, one of perfect liberty and entire subjection. They are "free," and they are "the servants of God." They are free in reference to God, both as being delivered from a condemned state and a slavish character; free in reference to their fellow-men; free in reference to the powers and the principles of evil. They are the servants of God, bought by the blood of his Son, formed to habits of obedience by his Spirit, voluntarily devoted to and actually engaged in his service.

Their duty is generally to act according to their condition; to act as freemen in reference to God, men, and the powers and principles of evil, guarding against abusing their freedom in any of these forms; and to act as the servants of God, cultivating the principles of obedience, habitually keeping in view those perfections of the Divine character, and those relations in which they stand to God, in which the obligation to serve God originates, and the belief of which is the grand means which the Holy Scriptures employ to fit and dispose us to recognize and discharge that obligation; making themselves acquainted with the rule of obedience, carefully studying the word of God, observing the providence of God, and seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God; and exercising this principle, and applying this rule in actual obedience, both inward and outward, both active and passive—obedience characterized by implicitness, impartiality, cheerfulness, and permanence.

More particularly their duty is to "honor all men," to cherish respect for all who, from their station, endowments, or character, deserve respect, though they be not Christians; and to cherish and express in their conduct respect for every man, as a rational, responsible, immortal being; to "love the brotherhood," to cultivate and manifest an affectionate regard to the christian society by joining a christian church; being regular in attending its assemblies, contributing time, labor, substance to its objects, seeking its purity, peace, and increase; and by cherishing, and in every becoming manner expressing, an affectionate regard to the whole household of faith, both in earth and heaven, the one family called by the worthy name; "to fear God," cherishing such an awful sense of his infinite grandeur and excellence, as will make us practically consider his approbation as the highest of blessings, his disapprobation as the greatest of evils; and, finally, "to honor the king," yielding a cheerful conscientious obedience to the laws, an obedience founded on, and limited by, the command to "fear God."

All that remains now is the practical application. But that must be attended to, not here, but elsewhere. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." May our improved character and conduct in all the various relations of life, show that we understand how practically to apply the instructions we have received, and that we have learned, "as free, not using our liberty as a cloak of wick-

edness, but as the servants of God, to honor all men; to love the brotherhood; to fear God; and to honor the king." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, laying apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, let us show that we have received with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls: but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," not God; not your brethren even, generally, only your own selves. "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

NOTE A. p. 307.

"Man was God's own creature, raised out of nothing by his mighty and most arbitrary hand: it was in his power and choice, whether he ever should have a being; any or none; another, or this, of so noble an order and kind. The designation was most apt of so excellent a creature, to be immediately sacred to himself and his own converse, his temple and habitation, the mansion and residence of his presence and indwelling glory. There was nothing whereto he was herein designed, whereof his nature was not capable. His soul was, after the required manner, receptive of a Deity. Its powers were competent to their appointed work and employment. It could entertain God by knowledge and contemplation of his glorious excellences, by reverence and love, by adoration and praise. This was the highest kind of dignity whereto created nature could be raised, the most honorable state. How high and quick an advance! This moment nothing; the next, a being capable, and full, of God."

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"The stately ruins (of human nature) are visible to every eye, that bear in their front, yet extant, this doleful inscription—HERE GOD ONCE DWELT. Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man, to show the Divine presence did some time reside in it; more than enough of vicious deformity, to proclaim that he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct; the altar overturned: the light and love are now vanished, which did the one shine with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with such pious fervor. The golden candlestick is displaced, and thrown away as a useless thing, to make way for the throne of the prince of darkness; the sacred incense, which sent rolling up in clouds its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous hellish vapor. The comely order of this house is turned all into confusion; the beauties of holiness into noxious impurities; the house of prayer into a den of thieves. The noble powers, which were designed and dedicated to Divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed in vilest intuitions and embraces: to behold and admire lying vanities; to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness: * * * Look upon the fragments of that curious sculpture, which once adorned this palace of that great King: the relics of common notions; the lively prints of some undefaced truth; the fair ideas of things; the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold with what accuracy the broken pieces show them to have been engraven by the finger of God; and how they now lie torn and scattered, one in this dark corner and another in that, buried in heaps of dust and rubbish! There is not now a system, an entire table of coherent truths to be found, or a frame of holiness; but some shivered parcels. And if any, with great skill and labor, apply themselves to draw out here one piece, and there another, and set them together, they serve rather to show how exquisite the Divine workmanship was in the original composition, than for present use to the excellent purposes for which the whole was first designed. * * * You come amid all this confusion as into the ruined palace of some great prince; in which you see here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery, and all lying, neglected and useless,

among heaps of dust. * * * The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of the temple, too plainly show THE GREAT INHABITANT IS GONE."—HOWE. Living Temple, Part. ii. ch. iv.

"Homo est animal rationale, et ex hoc, cunctis terrenis animantibus excellentius atque præstantius, sed in qualibet minutissima muscula bene consideranti stuporem mentis ingerat, laudemque pariat creatoris. Ipse itaque animæ humanæ mentem dedit, ubi ratio et intelligentia in infante sopita est quodammodo, quasi nulla sit, excitanda scilicet atque exercenda ætatis accessu, qua sit scientiæ capax atque doctrinæ, et habilis perceptioni veritatis et amori boni. Qua capacitate hauriat sapientiam virtutibusque sit prædita, quibus prudenter, fortiter, temperanter et juste adversus errores et cætera ingenerata vitia dimicet, eaque nullius rei desiderio nisi boni illius summi atque incommutabilis vincat. Quod etsi non faciat ipsa talium bonorum capacitas in natura rationali divinitus instituta, quantum sit boni, quam mirabile opus omnipotentis, quis competenter effatur, aut cogitat? Præter enim artes bene vivendi, et ad immortalem perveniendi felicitatem quæ virtutes vocantur, et sola Dei gratia quæ in Christo est, filiis promissionis regnique donantur, nonne humano ingenio tot tantæque artes sunt inventæ et exercitæ partim necessariæ, partim voluntariæ, ut tam excellens vis mentis atque rationis in his etiam rebus, quas superfluas, imo et periculosas perniciosasque appetit quantum bonum habeat in natura, unde ista potuit vel invenire, vel discere, vel exercere testetur? Vestimentorum et ædificiorum ad opera quam mirabilia, quam stupenda industria humana pervenerit, quo in agricultura, quo in navigatione profecerit: quæ in fabricatione quorumque vasorum, vel etiam statuarum et picturarum varietate excogitaverit et impleverit: quæ in theatris mirabilia spectantibus, audientibus incredibilia facienda et exhibenda molita sit: in capiendis, occidendis, domandis irrationalibus animantibus, quæ et quanta repererit: adversus ipsos homines, tot genera venenorum, tot armorum, tot machinamentorum, et pro salute mortali tuenda atque reparanda, quot medicamenta atque adjumenta comprehenderit: pro voluptate faucium, quot condimenta et gulæ incitamenta repererit: ad indicandas et suadendas cogitationes, multitudinem varietatemque signorum, ubi præcipuum locum verba et literæ tenent: ad delectandos animos, quos elocutionis ornatus, quam diversorum carminum copiam: ad mulcendas aures, quot organa musica, quot cantilenæ modos excogitaverit: quantam peritiam dimensionum atque numerorum: meatusque et ordines siderum quanta sagacitate comprehenderit, quam multa rerum mundanarum cognitione se impleverit, quis possit eloqui, maxime si velimus non acervatim cuncta cogerere, sed in singulis immorari? In ipsis postremo erroribus et falsitatibus defendendis, quam magna claruerint ingenia philosophorum atque hæreticorum, quis existimare sufficiat?"

* * * * * *

"Apostolus de ipsis in illud regnum prædestinatus loquens: Qui proprio, inquit, filio non perpercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit eum, quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit? Cum haec promissio complebitur, quid erimus? quales erimus? quæ bona in illo regno accepturi sumus, quandoquidem Christo moriente pro nobis tale iam pignus accepimus? qualis erit spiritus hominis, nullum omnino habens vitium, nec sub quo jaceat: nec cui cedat: nec contra quod saltem laudabiliter dimicet, pacatissima virtute perfectus? Rerum ibi omnium quanta, quam speciosa, quam certa scientia sine errore aliquo, vel labore, ubi Dei sapientia de ipso suo fonte potabitur, cum summa felicitate, sine ulla difficultate? Quale erit corpus, quod omnimodo spiritui subditum, et eo sufficienter vivificatum nullis alimoniis indigebit? Non enim animale, sed spirituale erit, habens quidem carnis, sed sine ulla carnali corruptione, substantiam."—AUGUSTINUS. De Civitate Dei, Lib. xxii. cap. xxiv.

NOTE B. p. 318.

The sentences which follow formed part of the discourse, when delivered as an address to a joint meeting of the United Secession and Relief Presbyteries of Edinburgh. The union anticipated has been consummated under the happiest auspices. ESTO PERPETUA.

"These two bodies[1] are, in reality, more united than any one large ecclesiastical body that I am acquainted with; and it would be much easier to prove that most of those bodies should become two or more distinct societies, than that our two distinct societies should not become one. I will not speak of the great Antichristian confederacy, which boasts of union as one of its characteristics; but in which almost every variety of opinion, every degree of belief, and unbelief, and misbelief, may be found, under the cloak of 'exoteric faith in the bond of ignorance, fear, and hypocrisy.'[2] Nor will I speak of the established churches, those 'cities of the nations,' daughters of 'Great Babylon,' which, in this

[1] The United Secession and the Relief Churches. [2] Jortin.

respect, have generally a strong likeness to their mystic mother; but I run no hazard of being confuted, when I say, that there is far less extent of agreement of sentiment, and much greater diversity of opinion, among the Congregationalists, or the Baptists, or the Methodists, in Britain, who are generally regarded as each forming but one body, or in either of the great bodies of Presbyterians in America, than in the two churches which are represented here this evening. I do not think that it would be easy to prove that these churches should ever have been separate. I should not like to attempt it, though their separate existence may easily be accounted for, on principles which throw no discredit on the conscientiousness of either body; but I am quite sure it would be very difficult to prove that they ought not now to be one. I know no argument which would prove that I should not unite with the Relief Church, which, if fairly followed out, would not compel me to abandon the communion of the United Secession Church. It has been my conviction for a considerable period, that if these churches are not ripe for union, they ought to be so; and, while utterly indisposed to push an incorporation of the two bodies, at the hazard of mutilating either, or of pressing brethren to take a step regarding which they are not 'fully persuaded in their own minds,' I am more and more convinced, that if those ministers and people of both bodies who see their way clear, would act out their principles to the full extent that the decisions of the two supreme courts warrant, the period could not be distant when the feeling of wonder why, being one, we should still continue divided, and the experience of the sacred delights and solid advantages of such occasional intercourse, would call forth, on the part of the christian people, an expression of desire for complete union, which the two Synods would not only feel warranted to respond to, but would feel it impossible to refuse to gratify. The Lord hasten it in his time."

NOTE C. p. 321.

There is something very pleasing in the following ascription of praise to God by a bishop of the 12th century, clothed though it be in monkish rhymes, which Archbishop Usher designates "Rhythmos *Elegantissimos*;" an epithet which makes us somewhat doubtful if his Grace's taste was at all proportionate to his piety and learning:

"Super cuncta, subter cunctus,
Extra cuncta, intra cunctus,
Subter cuncta, nec subtractus,
Super cuncta, nec elatus,
Inter cuncta, nec inclusus,
Extra cuncta, nec exclusus,
Intra, nusquam coarctaris,
Extra nusquam delataris,
Subter, nullo fatigaris,
Super, nullo sustentaris."

HILDEBERTUS. Rhythm. de Trin.

NOTE D. p. 325.

The following account of the fear of God which Christians should cherish, by Archbishop Leighton, presents a noble specimen of the most of the characteristic excellencies of that most saintly man, sound divine, and elegant scholar:—

"This fear had chiefly these things:—1. A reverent esteem of the majesty of God, which is a main fundamental thing in religion, and that moulds the heart most powerfully to the obedience of his will. 2. A firm belief of the purity of God, and of his power and justice; that he loves holiness and hates all sin, and can and will punish it. 3. A right apprehension of the bitterness of his wrath and the sweetness of his love: that his incensed anger is the most terrible and intolerable thing in the world, absolutely the fearfulest of all evils; and, on the other side, his love, of all good things the best, the most blessed and delightful, yea, only blessedness. Life is the name of the sweetest good we know; and yet this 'loving-kindness is better than life,' says David. 4. It supposes likewise sovereign love to God, for his own infinite excellency and goodness. 5. From all these things spring a most earnest desire to please him in all things, and unwillingness to offend him in the least; and because of our danger through the multitude and strength of tentations, and our own weakness, a continual self-suspicion, a holy fear lest we should sin, and a care and watchfulness that we sin not, and deep sorrow and speedy returning, and humbling before him, when we have sinned.

"There is indeed a base kind of fear, that, in the usual distinction, they call servile fear; but to account all fear of the judgments and wrath of God a servile fear (or, not to

stand upon words), to account such a fear improper to the children of God, I conceive, is a wide mistake. Indeed, to fear the punishment of sin, without regard to God, and his justice as the inflicter of them, or to forbear to sin only because of those punishments, so as if a man can be secured from those, who hath no other respect to God that would make him fear to offend, this is the character of a slavish and base mind.

"Again, for a man so to apprehend wrath in relation to himself as to be still under the horror of it in that notion, and not to apprehend redemption and deliverance by Jesus Christ, is to be under that spirit of bondage which the apostle speaks of, Rom. viii. And such fear, though a child of God may for a time be under it, yet the lively actings of faith and persuasion of God's love, and the feeling of reflex love to him in the soul, doth cast it out; according to that of the apostle, 1 John iv. 18, 'True love casteth out fear.' But to apprehend the punishments the Lord threatens against sin as certain and true, and to consider the greatness and fearfulness of them, but especially the terror of the Lord's anger and hot displeasure above all punishments, and (though not only, no, nor chiefly for these) yet, in contemplation of those, as very great and weighty, to be afraid to offend that God who hath threatened such things as the just reward of sin; this, I say, is not incongruous with the estate of the son of God, yea, it is their duty and their property even thus to fear.

"1. This is the very end for which God hath published these intimations of his justice, and hath threatened to punish men if they transgress, to the end they may fear and not transgress; so that not to look upon them thus, and to be affected with them answerably to their intendment, were a very grievous sin, a slight and disregard put upon the words of the great God.

"2. Of all others, the children of God have the rightest and clearest knowledge of God, and the deepest belief of his word; and therefore they cannot choose but be afraid, and more afraid than all others, to fall under the stroke of his hand. They know more of the greatness and truth, and justice of God, than others, and therefore they fear when he threatens. 'My flesh trembleth for fear of thee (says David), and I am afraid of thy judgments;' yea, they tremble when they hear the sentence against others, or see the execution on them, it minds them when they see public executions; and 'knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,' says St. Paul; they cry out with Moses, Psal. xc., 'Who knows the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear so is thy wrath.' It is not an imagination nor invention that makes men fear more than they need; His wrath is as terrible as any that fears it most can apprehend, and beyond. So that this doth not only consist with the estate of the saints, but is their very character, to tremble at the word of their Lord: the rest neglect what he says, till death and judgment seize on them; but the godly know and believe that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

"And though they have firm promises, and a kingdom that cannot be shaken, yet they have still this grace by which they serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, even in this consideration, that our God, even he that is ours by peculiar covenant, is a 'consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 28, 29.

"But indeed, together with this, yea, more than with these, they are persuaded to fear the Lord by the sense of his great love to them, and the power of that love that works in them towards him, and is wrought in them by his. 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days,' Hos. iii. 5. In those days his goodness shall manifest itself more than before; the beams of his love shall break forth more abundantly in the days of the gospel, and shall beat more direct and hotter on the hearts of men; and then they shall fear him more, because they shall love him more.

"This fear agrees well both with faith and love; yea, they work it: compare Psal. xxxi. 23, with Psal. xxxiv. 9; and that same Psal. xxxiv. 8, with 9, and Psal. cxii. 1, with 7. The heart, touched with the loadstone of Divine love, trembles still with this godly fear, and yet looks fixedly by faith to that star of Jacob, Jesus Christ, who guides it to the haven of happiness.

"The looking upon God in the face of Jesus Christ takes off that terror of his countenance that drives men from him; and in the smiles of his love that appear through Christ, there is such a power as unites their hearts to him, but unites them so as to fear his name, as the Psalmist's prayer is. He puts such a fear in their hearts as will not cause them depart from, yea, causes that they 'shall not depart from him.'

"And this is the purest and highest kind of godly fear that springs from love; and though it excludes not the consideration of wrath, as terrible in itself, and some fear of it, yet it may surmount it; and doubtless, where much of that love possesses the heart, it will sometimes drown the other consideration, that it shall scarcely be sensible at all, and will constantly set it aside, and persuade a man purely for the goodness and loveliness of God to fear to offend him, though there were no interest at all in it of a man's own personal misery or happiness."

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN SERVANTS ENJOINED AND ENFORCED.

1 Pet. ii. 18–25.—Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

In these words we have a further illustration of the general injunction laid on Christians by the apostle at the 12th verse of this chapter, to "have their conversation honest among the Gentiles;" that is, so to conduct themselves as that even their heathen neighbors should be constrained to approve them. That injunction is, as it were, the text of a considerably long paragraph which immediately follows. The manner in which that command was to be obeyed, was by a careful performance of relative duties, especially such as they owed to their heathen connections. Of the excellence of such a course of conduct they were qualified judges, which they were not of duties of a more strictly religious and christian character. All Christians were, therefore, to yield a loyal subjection to civil authority, as lodged both in its supreme and subordinate administrators; to cherish and display a becoming respect for all who, on whatever ground, had a claim to respect; to cultivate and manifest that peculiar regard to the christian society, which in Christians even heathens could not help considering as becoming and proper; and to show a reverence for the supreme civil power, based on, and only limited by, the reverence due to Him who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." The natural tendency of such "good works," habitually and perseveringly maintained, was to overcome the prejudice of their heathen neighbors, and constrain those "who spoke against them as evil-doers, to glorify God in the day of visitation."

Another way in which the same desirable object was to be sought is that specified in our text: such Christians as stood in the relation of servants, especially to heathen masters, faithfully discharging the duties, and patiently submitting to the hardships, connected with the situation in which they were placed. The passage contains an ac-

count first of the duties of christian servants generally, and of the manner in which they should be performed; they are to be "subject to their masters," and they are to be so "in all fear:" And then of the duty of a particular class of servants: those who have not good and gentle, but froward masters, and of the motives which urge to its performance. Though their service may be harder, and their treatment more severe than those of their more favored brethren, they are to be equally obedient and submissive; and they are to act in this way, because such conduct is peculiarly well-pleasing to God, and because it is a part of that holiness, that conformity to Christ, to which as Christians they were called. Let us turn our attention to these important and interesting topics in their order.

§ 1.—*The foundation and nature of the relation between Servant and Master.*

Servants, at the period when, and in the country where, the Christians, to whom the apostle's epistle was directed, lived, were divided into two classes, the bond and the free; the first, slaves, persons who had been taken in war, or had been born in a state of slavery, or had, for certain considerations, sold their freedom; the second, hired servants, persons who, as in this and other free countries, voluntarily sell their time and labor, during a specified period, for a certain price, under the name of sustenance and wages. The injunction of the apostle is intended for both these classes; for, however a person may be brought into the condition of a servant, the duties of that condition are substantially the same. Before entering on the consideration of these duties, it may not be without its use to unfold in a few sentences, the nature and foundation of that relation in which these duties originate.

All men, viewed merely as men, are equal. They all have the same nature, and there are rights and duties common to all. They all belong to the same order of God's creatures, "God has made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth."[1] Their bodies have the same members, their minds the same faculties. They are all rational, responsible, immortal beings, and every man is equally bound to treat every other man according to the laws of truth, justice, and humanity.

But while, in reference to nature, men are equal, in reference to condition they are endlessly diversified. In bodily qualities, such as beauty, strength, and agility; in mental faculties, such as judgment, imagination, and memory; in external circumstances, from the rudest state of barbarism to the highest state of refinement, from the most abject poverty to the most abundant wealth, the greatest differences prevail among the possessors of our common nature. And these differences, to a great extent, are the necessary effect of the operations of the God of nature and of providence.

In consequence of this diversity of condition, individuals are not sufficient for their own comfortable support, and stand in need of one another's assistance; and the happiness of men in society, depends on

[1] Acts xvii. 26.

mutually giving and receiving: giving what they can spare, receiving what they need. Out of these facts grow all social arrangements, and, among the rest, the relation of master and servant.

A person possessed of property finds it inconvenient or impossible for him to do personally many things which he finds it desirable should be done, and he parts with a portion of his property to induce another person, fit for accomplishing the objects in view, who has time, and skill, and capacity of labor to dispose of, to do for him what he cannot do, or is not inclined to do, for himself. The master has no natural authority over the servant. He has no more right to demand the labors of the servant, than the servant has to demand his.

The relation, when legitimately formed, originates in a bargain or agreement between two independent individuals; the one having property, the other labor, to dispose of. The master stipulates that the servant shall perform certain services for certain wages; and the servant stipulates that the master shall pay him certain wages for certain services. The result of the bargain is, that the master has authority to demand the stipulated service, and the servant has a right, which he may call on their common superior to enforce, to receive his wages.[1]

§ 2.—*The duties of Christian servants in general.*

Having thus stated, as shortly and plainly as I could, the nature and foundation of the relation of the servant to the master, let us now attend to the duties which flow from it. These are all summed up in one very comprehensive word in the passage before us: "Subjection." "Servants be subject to your masters:" that is, let your will be regulated by their will. In other words, be obedient to their commands; be submissive to their arrangements.

(1.) Servants are to be obedient to the commands of their master; that is, they are to do what their master bids them, in the way in which he requires it to be done, to the best of their ability. A servant cannot reasonably expect to be his own master; to be allowed to choose how he shall employ his time; what he shall do, or even in what manner the service required shall be executed. He has taken a price for his time and his capacity of labor, and it is but just that he who has bought them should dispose of them. They are no more his than his wages are his master's. He is a person under authority, who, when bid come, must come; when bid go, must go; and when bid do this, must do it.

The servant's obligation to obey, however, is by no means unlimited. It has bounds corresponding with the master's right. No master has, or can have, a right to command anything that is inconsistent with the divine law; and of course no servant can be under an obligation to comply with such a command. The rule is plain and absolute, when the will of an earthly master is opposed to the will of our Master in heaven, "We ought to obey God rather than man."[2]

[1] In this and the succeeding part of the discourse, the author has availed himself of the useful labors of Bishop Fleetwood, in his "Sermons on Relative Duties," and of Dr. Stennet, in his "Discourses on Domestic Duties."

[2] Acts v. 29.

Should a master require his servant to speak falsely, to act fraudulently or to violate any Divine precept, such a command ought to meet with a respectful, but peremptory refusal. And it is for the servant to judge whether a particular command is or is not consistent with the Divine law: for "every one of us shall give an account of *himself* to God." [1] It will not be sustained as an excuse at the Divine tribunal, for a servant doing what was wrong, that his master commanded him to do it. Servants ought, however, to take care not to withhold obedience to a just command, from a pretended regard to conscience, when the true cause of their non-compliance is their sloth or self-indulgence. In such a case there is a double guilt contracted. The human master is disobeyed, and the Divine Master is insulted. There is a shocking union of dishonesty and impiety.

A master has, can have, no right, to command what is impracticable, what is not in the servant's power; and therefore, in such cases, the servant is under no obligation to obedience. The Israelites were not to blame when they did not obey Pharaoh, commanding them to make bricks, when he withheld from them straw. There is nothing wrong in a servant refusing to attempt what he knows to be an impossibility, or what he is aware cannot be done, or attempted to be done, without materially injuring him. It is quite possible, indeed, that a servant may pretend incapacity for a particular piece of service, when what is wanting is not power but will; but no christian servant will ever act in this way, and masters ought to be careful not to impose any unreasonable burdens; acting always on that rule of our Lord, which, if carefully attended to, would keep everything in social life right: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." [2]

Masters have no right to demand obedience in matters that do not fall within the limits of the agreement entered into with the servant; and of course servants are under no obligation to yield obedience in such cases. At the same time servants of a right disposition will not, where the comfort of the family is obviously concerned, be very nice in measuring the precise limits of the appropriate sphere of service, and will conscientiously guard against making their freedom from obligation in this matter a cloak of sloth or ill temper.

With these exceptions, servants are bound to obey their masters in all things. A servant must not trifle with, or disobey a command, because *he* thinks it refers to a matter of but little moment. That is a subject in which he is not at all called to judge; and what he thinks of little importance, may be, in his master's estimation, and in reality, a matter of the greatest importance; nor is difference of opinion, though the servant may be right, nor disinclination to the service required, to be considered as affording any reason for disobedience. A servant may, without any violation of duty, offer his opinion to his master, if he do it respectfully; nay, duty may in some cases require him to do so; but he is never to forget, that it is not his judgment, but his master's, that is ultimately to determine the matter; and this even although his master assign no satisfactory reason, or no reason at all.

[1] Rom. xiv. 12. [2] Matt. vii. 12.

This obedience, which is due by servants to their masters, ought to be characterized by respectfulness, faithfulness, diligence, and cheerfulness. A rude, forward, assuming behavior, is exceedingly unbecoming in servants. The Divine command is, that christian servants, even in the case of their masters being heathens, "count them worthy of all honor, not answering again:" "And if they are believers, that they do not despise them, because they are brethren."[1] Fidelity must also characterize the christian servant. With regard to the time, and the property, and the reputation of his master, he must be scrupulously faithful. He must guard these as if they were his own. There must be "no purloining, but a showing all-good fidelity." Diligence is a third character which should distinguish the obedience of the christian servant. All trifling, sauntering, and loitering should be avoided; and they should not be "eye-servants, as men-pleasers," but "diligent in business," "as the servants of God." And, finally, they should be cheerful in their obedience. Few things are more unworthy of a christian servant than that mulish surly obstinacy, which Solomon so graphically describes when he says: "He is not to be corrected by words; for though he understand, yet will he not answer." The apostle Paul enjoins christian servants, "with good-will to do service, as to the Lord, and not to man." This forms the most important part of the christian servant's duty, to obey the commands of his master.

(2.) Under the general head "subjection," however, is also included submission to the appointments of his master. The economy of the household is to be directed by the master; and where these arrangements in no degree interfere with Divine appointments, and are not precluded by express stipulation, the servant must submit to them, though they may be in many respects disagreeable to him. The hours of rising and retiring to rest; the quality, and to a certain extent the quantity of sustenance, and a vast variety of other arrangements, must to a great extent depend on the will of the master; and it is an important, though sometimes not a very easy part of the christian servant's duty to submit to these without murmuring, and not permit them to fret the temper, so as to be unfit for the cheerful and principled obedience which the law of Christ requires.

The manner in which the duty of subjection should be performed, the temper in which obedience and submission are to be yielded, comes now to be considered. "Servants, be subject to your masters in all fear." It has been common to consider these words as descriptive of that respectful feeling which servants should cherish towards their own masters, and to which we have already alluded. I apprehend, however, that the fear here referred to is not the fear of man in any of its forms, but the fear of God. The phrase "all fear," according to the idiom of the New Testament, signifies a high, or the highest degree of fear; as "all acceptation" is the highest degree of acceptation, "all wisdom" every kind and degree of wisdom; and it is not according to the genius of Christianity, nor indeed of revelation generally, to inculcate any high degree of fear of man. On the contrary, a leading object which they contemplate, is to elevate the mind above the fear of man, and, by leading man to fear God, to free him from all

[1] Tit. ii. 9. 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

other fear. "Who art thou," says the prophet, "that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be as the grass?" "Be ye not afraid of them," says our Lord, "who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do:" "Be not afraid of their terror," says the apostle; "neither be ye troubled." The prophet says, "Sanctify the Lord in your heart, and let Him be your fear and your dread;" our Lord says, "Fear Him, who after he has killed the body, can cast both soul and body into hell-fire; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him;" and his apostle repeats the injunction of the prophet, "Sanctify the Lord in your heart." [1]

The fear of God is the temper in which Christians are to perform all their duties. They are "to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God." They are to "submit themselves to one another in the fear of God." [2]

The word "fear," without the adjunct "of the Lord," is certainly used in the New Testament to signify religious fear; fear which has God for its object. That is plainly its meaning when it is said, that "Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark;" and when it is said, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." That seems its meaning, also, when the Corinthians are said to have received Titus, "with fear and trembling;" and when Christians are commanded to "work out their own salvation," or rather, as we are disposed to think, to labor for one another's salvation, "with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." [3]

In the passage in Eph. vi. 5, parallel to that under consideration, the "fear and trembling" with which servants are to perform their duties, is strictly connected with, "in singleness of your heart, as to Christ; not with eye-service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." And in Col. iii. 22, what in the passage just quoted is called "fear and trembling," is explained by the phrase "fearing God." Comparing all these passages together, I can scarcely doubt, that "with all fear," in the passage before us, is equivalent to, with a deeply pious temper; and that this, too, is its meaning at the second verse of the next chapter—where "chaste conversation mingled with fear," is just, I apprehend, chaste pious behavior, purity obviously rising from piety.

Christian servants, then, in performing their duties, are to do them from a regard to the Divine authority, depending on the Divine assistance, looking forward to the Divine tribunal, desirous, above all things, of the Divine approbation; fearing lest in anything the Divine disapprobation should be incurred. This is one of the many instances in which we find Christianity converting everything into religion, teaching men "to set the Lord always before them;" and in the most ordinary offices of life, "whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, to do all to the glory of God." [4]

[1] Isa. li. 12. Luke xii. 4. Isa. viii. 13. Luke xii. 5. 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15.

[2] 2 Cor. vii. 1. Eph. v. 21.

[3] Heb. xi. 7. 1 Pet. i. 17. 2 Cor. vii. 15. Phil. ii. 12. On the last of these passages —a difficult one, and generally, I think, misunderstood—Pierce's Note deserves to be consulted.

[4] Psal. xvi. 8. 1 Cor. x. 31.

§ 3.—*The duties of a particular class of christian servants.*

Let us now turn our attention for a little, to the view which the apostle gives us of the duty of a particular class of christian servants, and of the motives which he employs to urge them to its performance. The servants he refers to are those who have not "good," kind, "and gentle masters," but "froward," perverse, unreasonable, rough, unkind masters. Now what is *their* duty? It is still to be subject, just as if they were good and gentle.

It is no part of a Christian's duty to enter into the service of a froward master, if he can make a better arrangement; nor to remain in his service any longer than engagement obliges, or other circumstances require; and it is not wrong for a christian servant to avail himself of all the means which the law of his country furnishes him with, to protect himself from injury and ill-usage from a froward master. But the apostle supposes the christian servant, or slave, in the providence of God, placed under a froward master. Even in countries where the interests of servants are much better cared for by law than in the age and country referred to by the apostle, servants who have froward masters have often a great deal of suffering to submit to from unreasonable commands, and arrangements, and unkind overbearing tempers, that no law can protect them from; and this was the case to an immeasurably greater degree among those to whom this epistle was directed.

Now, what was their duty? Was there any relaxation in the precept, "Be subject?" None in the least. The unkind irritating behavior of the master is not to be sustained as an excuse for evading or disobeying his commands, nor even for yielding a grudging obedience: the hardships of the situation are to be patiently submitted to while they continue; and there is to be no attempt to lessen or remove them by neglecting or violating relative duty. This makes us see how necessary it is for the christian servant to do his duty "with all fear," in a pious spirit, from a regard to God's authority; feeling that though the commands of his master are in themselves harsh and unreasonable, it is a wise and good commandment that requires him, in his circumstances, to be subject to his master, within the limits already described; that though the yoke of the earthly master is oppressive, the yoke of the Master in heaven is reasonable.

§ 4.—*Motives to the discharge of these duties.*

This duty of cheerful, patient obedience to harsh and unreasonable masters, is a very difficult one, and therefore the apostle enforces it by very powerful motives. These are two: first, patient endurance of undeserved suffering, is of high estimation in the sight of God; and, secondly, it is a part of that conformity to the image of God's Son, to which Christians are called, and to secure which was one great design of the sacrifice of God's Son. Let us look at these two motives in their order.

(1.) *Patient endurance of undeserved wrong enforced by the consideration, that it is "acceptable to God."*

The first is stated in these words, "For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully: for what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is[1] acceptable with God." The christian servant under a froward master is described as "suffering wrongfully." He does his duty faithfully and cheerfully, yet he does not receive the kind treatment his conduct merits; he may not be treated *illegally*, so as that his master lays himself open to punishment, but he may be made to endure a great deal of severe suffering within these limits. That may take place, often does take place, even now, and in this country, where the rights of servants are better understood, and more effectually protected, than in most countries; and must have taken place to a much greater degree in ages and countries where heathenism and slavery prevailed, and where even the civil rights of hired servants were much more limited than they are with us.

When the christian servant acted in character, though suffering wrongfully, he "endured grief;" that is, not merely felt the uneasiness his master's treatment of him naturally produced, but bore it meekly and patiently. The word "endure," is employed in the same sense as when it is said, "Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible." "We count them happy that endure." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," that is, trial.[2] There is neither merit nor demerit in merely suffering. It is the manner in which we suffer that deserves praise or blame.

Now, says the apostle, a christian servant conscientiously doing his duty to a froward master, bears patiently the unkind and injurious treatment he receives from him, "for conscience towards God." Some have supposed, that these words mean, that the bad treatment of the froward master was persecution because the servant was a Christian. That this might be, often was, the case, we cannot doubt; but that is not the idea conveyed by the words. The statement is, not that he suffers wrongfully for conscience towards God; but for conscience towards God he "endures," patiently suffers grief. He submits patiently to suffering, from an enlightened regard to the character and will of God. He believes that he is in his present circumstances by the providence of God; he knows God requires him to bear the evils he is subject to with fortitude and patience; he believes that God will support him under them, in due time deliver him from them, and make them work for his good; and therefore he "endures" them. "Such a servant's obedience is not pinned to the goodness and equity of his master, but, when that fails, will subsist on its own inward ground. This is the thing that makes sure and constant walking. It makes a man step even in the ways of God."[3]

Now, says the apostle, a christian servant acting in this way is

[1] Χάρις παρὰ Θεῷ. Imitatur Petrus phrasin, quam ipse, recens discipulus, ex Domino audierat. Luke vi. 32, 55.—Bengel.

[2] Heb. xi. 27. James v. 2; i. 12.

[3] Leighton.

an object of the complacent approbation of God. "This is thank-worthy," this is "acceptable with God;" there is glory in this. It is the same word that is rendered "thank-worthy" and "acceptable," and no good end is gained by varying the rendering. God regards with complacency the christian servant who, from a regard to his will, from a trust in his character, quietly and patiently bears unprovoked wrong, and does not allow his master's unworthy behavior to influence his discharge of his duty to him. And to every Christian the assurance that God looks with complacency on a particular course of conduct, is one of the most powerful motives which can be suggested for following it. Men may count you mean-spirited in submitting to such usage. God, who is infinitely wise, and whose approbation is of more importance than that of the whole universe of created beings, approves your conduct, counts your meekness true glory, and regards you with affectionate complacency. His eye rests benignantly on you. That far more than counterbalances the sour looks, and the harsh language, and the unkind treatment, of the froward master.

That such conduct, the patient endurance of undeserved suffering, is a proper object of complacent regard, the apostle shows, by contrasting it with the patient endurance of deserved suffering: "For what glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer ('for it,' is a supplement, and should not have been inserted; for there is no reason to think the servants suffered *for* doing well, but only notwithstanding their doing well), ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

In these words the apostle meets the very natural thought: It is very hard to suffer when we deserve a reward; we could receive merited chastisement without complaint; we should feel that in that case complaint was unreasonable; but to endure undeserved, unprovoked grief; to meet with insult and outrage, instead of the kind treatment our dutiful conduct entitles us to, this is hard indeed. The apostle does not deny this; but he says, you are placed in circumstances in which you have an opportunity of drawing down upon yourselves a larger measure of the approbation of God, than had you been placed in what you might have thought better circumstances. Neither God nor man could have regarded, with approbation, your conduct in meriting chastisement. If, after meriting chastisement, you had submitted to it patiently, both God and man would have approved of your conduct as what was fitting in the circumstances; but they would not have considered it as deserving of praise; the opposite kind of conduct, murmuring under chastisement incurred by fault, would have appeared most unreasonable and blamable. But God, and all good men who think along with God, will regard you with a high degree of affectionate complacency, if, under strong temptations to murmur, you "possess your souls in patience," and instead of, in any degree, "rendering evil for evil," endeavor to "overcome evil with good." [1]

The reason why such conduct is peculiarly acceptable to God is, that all undeserved suffering, endured patiently from religious motives,

[1] Luke xxi. 19. Rom. xii. 17, 21.

shows the submission of the mind and will to God. It is an embodiment of the soul of true religion, "Not my will, but thine be done. The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?"[1]

It may be worth observing, in passing, that from the language used, it is plain that masters had then the power of corporal chastisement, and that they were not slack in using it: "If ye be buffeted for your faults." All ranks of men, and especially the subordinate ones, have great cause to be thankful to Christianity, which not only changes the hearts of individuals, but mitigates and mellows the manners of communities. No master in our land can buffet a servant but at his peril.

This, then, is the first motive which the apotle urges on christian servants to patient endurance of unmerited suffering from froward masters.

And is it not a powerful one? What the Christian would be at is the praise of God. If he can secure that, is it not enough? As Archbishop Leighton says, "If men commend him not, he accounts it no loss, and little gain if they do. He is bound to a country where that coin grows not, and whither he cannot carry it; and therefore he gathers it not. That which he seeks in all is, that he may be approved and accepted of God, whose thanks to the least of those whom he accepts is no less than a crown of unfading glory. Not a poor servant that fears his name, and is obedient and patient for his sake, but will thus be rewarded. Not any cross that is taken, what way so ever it comes, as out of his hand, and carried patiently, yea, and welcomed and embraced for his sake, but he observes our so entertaining it. Not an injury which the meanest servant bears christianly, but goes upon account with him, and he sets them so as that they bear much value through his esteem and way of reckoning them, though in themselves they are all less than nothing, as a worthless counter stands for hundreds or thousands, according to the place you set it in. Happy they who have to deal with such a Lord; and be they servants or masters, are avowed servants to Him. When he comes his reward will be with him."

The great principle which the apostle requires christian servants to act from, in cheerfully doing the duties and enduring the hardships of their condition, is "conscience towards God." Submission to the Divine will, respect to the Divine authority, desire of the Divine approbation, should be, and, if we are Christians, will be, the ruling principle of our conduct in all our actings and sufferings in life. To borrow the striking words of him whom in these discourses I so often quote, "Let us all, whether servants or not, set the Lord always before us, and study, with Paul, to have 'a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.' Let us apply constantly to our actions and to our inward thoughts the command of God. Let us walk by that rule abroad and at home, in our houses and in the several ways of our calling, as an exact workman, who is ever and anon applying his rule to his work, and squaring it. Let us, from conscience towards God, do and suffer his will cheerfully in everything, being content that he should choose our condition and trials for us;

[1] John xviii. 11. Luke xxii. 43.

only desirous to be assured that he has chosen us for his own, set us apart for himself, and secured for us 'the glorious liberty of the children of God,' and the full 'redemption of the purchased possession.'" Let us seek as our great object, "that whether we sleep or wake we may be accepted of him," and obtain at last the inheritance, as those who serve the Lord Christ. Let us steadily walk in the way that leads to this inheritance, overlooking this momentary scene and all things in it, accounting it a very indifferent matter what our outward state here be in this moment, provided we may be happy in eternity. Whether we be high or low here, bond or free, imports but little, seeing all these differences will so quickly be at an end, and no traces of them be found forever. It is so with individual men in the grave: you may distinguish the greater from the less, the monarch from the slave, by their tombs, but not by their dust; and yet a little while in the reckoning of the Eternal, and all these external distinctions will pass away; the palace and the cottage equally disappearing, while "the elements melt in fervent heat, and the earth and all the works that are therein are burnt up." Yet, then shall the "righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father," and their lustre shall be proportioned to their righteousness. When all earthly splendor has vanished in darkness, patient endurance of suffering for conscience' sake shall be found unto glory inextinguishable; and the slave who for conscience to God, in circumstances of peculiar trial, "enduring grief, suffering wrongfully," proved that the mind of Christ was in him, and that he had learned to walk in the steps of the example he has left behind him, shall receive tokens of a degree of Divine approbation, which may be withheld from many who, placed in what men reckoned far more enviable circumstances, have not attained to the same measure of conformity to him who is "the brightness of glory," "the excellency of beauty," the "first-born among many brethren."

(2.) *Patient endurance of undeserved suffering enforced from a consideration of Christ's sufferings.*

I go on now to turn your attention to the second motive by which the apostle enforces the duty of christian servants patiently enduring undeserved suffering. That motive is stated in the following words: —"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The motive is derived from the sufferings of Christ, and may so far be considered a simple one; but as these sufferings are plainly, in different parts of the text, viewed in different aspects, first as exemplary, and then as expiatory, it must also, if we would feel its full force, be considered as

a complex one. "Hereunto are ye called." Patient, undeserved suffering is a portion of that conformity to Christ, to which, as Christians, ye are called: "Hereunto are ye called." Patient, undeserved suffering is a part of that universal holiness to which ye are called, and to secure which, was, so far as relates to man subjectively considered, the great ultimate object of our Lord's expiatory sufferings. The motive is presented in the first of these aspects in the 21st, 22d, and 23d verses, and in the second of them in the 24th and 25th. Let us attend to them in their order.

1.—*Christians called to patient suffering as a part of conformity to Christ.*

"Hereunto were ye called," or, to this were ye called. The first question that requires to be answered here is, to what does the apostle refer in these words? What is it that he represents these christian servants whom he is addressing as called to? Some have supposed that it is suffering for the cause of Christ—suffering on account of being Christians; and that the force of what he says may be thus stated, 'Ye are called to suffer for Christ, and it is very reasonable that ye should be so called, for He suffered for you.' There can be no doubt that the Christians of that age were generally called to suffer for Christ, and in a remarkable manner and degree; there can be as little doubt that it is a very good reason why Christians of every age should suffer for Christ, that He suffered for them; but a little attention will make it evident that it is not suffering merely for the cause of Christ, but patient, undeserved suffering, whatever might be the occasion, that is here referred to; and that the motive is not the general statement, "Christ suffered for us," but "Christ has set us an example of the patient endurance of undeserved suffering."

The substance of the apostle's argument may be thus stated: 'To this, even the patient endurance of sufferings wrongfully inflicted, are ye called as Christians, and to this, from a regard to the will of God.' And how does it appear, that as Christians, they are *called* to this? They were called to be "conformed to the image of God's Son," and in particular, they were called to "the fellowship of his sufferings," to suffer with him, like him, "in order to their being glorified together with him."[1] "He left them an example that they should follow his steps." He suffered; his sufferings were undeserved sufferings; he suffered for *them*, not for himself; and he sustained these undeserved sufferings most patiently, and from regard to the will of God. "When reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously." Admitting these premises, it follows that christian servants, exposed to undeserved sufferings, should not allow these sufferings to interfere with the discharge of their duties, but should bear them without murmuring, in submission to the Divine will. Let us look a little more closely at the facts here stated, the general principles here laid down, and the bearing which the two in connection have on the duty of christian servants exposed to unmerited suffering from froward mas-

[1] Rom. viii. 29. 1 Cor. i. 9. Phil. iii. 10.

ters, and of all Christians exposed to unmerited suffering from whatever cause.

And first, Of the facts here stated. The first of these is, "Christ suffered."[1] Our Lord, on assuming human nature, became capable of suffering; and having become a man born of woman, his days were few, and full of trouble. The sufferings which he endured were in number, variety, and severity, such as no human being ever experienced. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." "His countenance was more marred than that of any man, and his form than that of the sons of men."[2] The language which the prophet Jeremiah puts in the mouth of desolated Jerusalem might have been most appropriately used by him: "Is it nothing to all you who pass by: behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" The Captain of our salvation was made "perfect through suffering."[3]

These sufferings were all unmerited—unmerited by him. They were richly merited by those for whom, on whose account, for whose benefit, in whose room, they were endured, but they were utterly undeserved by him. His desert was the highest degree of enjoyment, of which his assumed nature was capable. When he suffered, he suffered for others, not for himself. Viewed in whatever light you please, his sufferings were undeserved from men. Viewed apart from the relation, which, in glad compliance with the will of his Father, he stood to ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinners of the human race, they were undeserved from his Father.

The idea, which is certainly intended to be suggested by the expression, "Christ suffered FOR US," is more fully brought out in the words that follow, "who did no sin, neither was guilt found in his mouth." In this clause the words of the prophet Isaiah, in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy, are certainly alluded to, if not directly quoted: "Who did no violence, neither was guile found in his mouth." It is scarcely possible to doubt that in these words there is a reference to the two charges which were brought against our Lord, and for which he was tried before the supreme civil and ecclesiastical courts of his country. Before the Roman government he was accused of "violence"—of "perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, stirring up all the people throughout all Jewry from Galilee to Jerusalem;"[4] and before the high priest and Sanhedrim he was accused of "guile"—of false doctrine in calling himself the Son of God, "making himself equal with God." The first charge his enemies so completely failed in substantiating, that the Roman governor, peculiarly sensitive on such a subject, and likely to have his suspicions easily roused and not easily allayed, after the closest examination, declared, "I find no fault in this man,"[5] that is, 'nothing even approximating to the charge brought against him has been proved.' And as to the second, there needed no proof that he made such claims; he readily admitted this: but he accompanied his claims with abundant

[1] Petrus non exprimit *quod* Christus passus sit, sed simpliciter dicit Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν, ut innuat, omne passionis genus Christum pro nobis tolerasse."—Jo. Hus.

[2] Job xiv. 1. Isa. liii. 3; lii. 14.

[3] Lam. i. 12. Heb. ii. 10.

[4] Luke xxiii. 5, 14.

[5] John v. 18. Luke xxii. 70; xxiii. 4.

evidence, that in making them there was "no guile in his mouth;" that he spoke nothing but the truth. All the sufferings, then, which were inflicted on him, as if he had been a perpetrator of crime, a teacher of falsehood, were undeserved sufferings.

But while this seems the direct reference of the words, they are without doubt intended to convey the idea of the perfect innocence, the absolute excellence of our Lord. Actions and words are the expression of thoughts and feelings; and he who neither in deed nor in word offends may well be presumed to be a perfect man. It has been truly and beautifully said, that "all Christ's words and actions flowed from a pure spring that had nothing defiled in it; other men may seem clean as long as they are unstirred, but move and trouble them, and the mud arises. But in this case, though stirred and agitated to the utmost, the deep fountain of his mind and heart remained, though troubled, perfectly pure, and sent forth nothing but the most pellucid streams." Men tried him, devils tried him, God tried him, and the result always was, "he did no sin, no guile was found in his mouth." Nothing could convict him of sin. There was no fault in him. He was, indeed, "such a high priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." "He was all fair; there was no spot in him."[1]

The third fact is, He endured all these undeserved sufferings with the utmost patience. "When reviled, he did not revile again; when he suffered, he threatened not." He patiently "endured" the "so great contradiction of sinners against himself," to which he was exposed. In many cases he maintained a meek silence, at other times he replied to their upbraidings and reproaches with calm reasonings, affectionate expostulations, and benignant prayers. When called a Sabbath-breaker, he replied by telling them that his Father, as well as himself, worked on the Sabbath-day; asking them whether it was lawful to do good or evil on that day; putting them in mind, that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" and bidding them "go and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." When charged with casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, he merely rebutted the shocking imputation by showing its absurdity. When upbraided as a companion of the dissolute and worthless, he justified the conduct on which they grounded the foul imputation, by saying, "they that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." When charged with blasphemy for saying to the man sick of the palsy, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," he merely directed their attention to the effect of his words, as containing a sufficient vindication of them. When they calumniated him as an impostor and seducer of the people, he made no sharp answer, but appealed to the works which he had done among them, as abundant evidence of the truth of all he said, as proving that he had not come of himself, but had been sent of his Father, God. When they took up stones to throw at him, all that he said was, "Many good works I have showed you of my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?" When he was rudely addressed, inhumanly

[1] Heb. vii. 26. Cant. iv. 7.

treated by a menial while at the bar of the Sanhedrim, his reply was, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" And when in the extremity of his suffering, the high priests, the soldiers, and the populace vied with each other who should most embitter his dying agonies, by scornful taunts and bitter revilings, they could draw forth from him neither reproach nor threatening. With a heart full of pity, he turned from them to his Father, and urged the only palliating circumstance in their crime, as an argument for their pardon, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[1]

Well does Archbishop Leighton say: "None ever did so little deserve revilings: none ever could have said so much in his own just defence, and to the just reproach of his enemies, and yet in both he preferred silence: none could ever threaten so heavy things as he could against his enemies, and have made good all that he threatened, and yet no such thing was ever heard of him. The heavens and the earth, as it were, spoke their resentment of the dishonor done to him who made them. The darkened sun, the shaking earth, the rending rocks, uttered rebuke, and denounced vengeance; but He held his peace. He was silent; or if he spoke, it was to show how far he was from revilings and threatenings."

The only other fact mentioned is, that when Christ patiently endured unmerited sufferings, he did so, from a regard to the will of his Father. It was not stupidity, it was not stoicism, it was enlightened, affectionate piety, which produced this patient, unresisting, uncomplaining suffering. "He committed himself to him who judgeth righteously."[2]

He looked above all second causes to the Great First Cause. He saw all coming forth from Him who is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." He saw in the events which occurred to him the manifestation of His will; and fully confident of his wisdom, and righteousness, and faithfulness, and benignity, he meekly submitted to them, persuaded that He would do all things well. "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?" "Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? For this purpose came I to this hour. Father, glorify thine own name." "Not my will, but

[1] John v. 17. Mark ii. 27. Matt. xii. 26. Luke v. 23, 31. John x. 32; xviii. 23. Luke xxiii. 34.

[2] It deserves to be noticed *here* that the Vulgate renders these words "tradebat judicanti se injuste;" and that the versions from the Vulgate give corresponding renderings. Roman Catholic critics and interpreters, who are generally unwilling to acknowledge errors in a version pronounced by the Council of Trent "authentica," have attempted to defend the rendering on the ground that it exhibits a very good sense, supposing the reference to be to Pilate. Though it were to give what might be thought a better sense than the "textus receptus," that is no evidence against the testimony of the Codd. Now all the Greek Codd. read with the "textus receptus." The citations of the Greek Fathers are also coincident. With the exception of one or two cases in the Latin Fathers, which may have been interpolations, they also agree with the T. R. It is not wonderful that Father Simon—very acute, but not very scrupulous—should support the Vulgate; but it is remarkable to find Causabon ὁ πάνε taking the same side. Estius, one of the most judicious and candid of the Roman Catholic commentators, says—"librariorum incuria in Codd. Latt. legitur *injuste* pro *juste*." There has been supposed to be a reference here to Jer. xi. 19, 20. If any passage of the Old Testament was in the apostle s mind, we should rather think of Psal. vii. 8; xxvi. 1; xxxv. 24; especially the last, as the 19th verse of that Psalm is referred to our Lord by himself.—John xv. 25.

thine be done." [1] He was persuaded that both He and his righteous cause, the cause of the divine glory, and the salvation of man, were safe, perfectly safe, in the hands of "him who judges righteously." He believed and he did not make haste. His own deliverance and glorious exaltation, the salvation of the millions for whom he was pouring out his soul unto death, and the merited punishment of the obstinate opposers of truth and righteousness, he was persuaded were as certain as if they had already taken place. They would all take place at the time, and in the manner, that seemed best to infinite wisdom, and holiness, and benignity; and he was willing to suffer as severely and as long as was requisite, to the gaining of these grand objects, according to the arrangements of Him who alone has wisdom. His temper is strikingly described in the words of one of his servants, who had much of the mind that was in him: "Lord, what thou wilt: when thou wilt: how thou wilt." [2] These are the facts, then, with regard to our Lord stated in the text: He suffered; his sufferings were undeserved; these undeserved sufferings were borne with patience; this patience originated in submission to the will of God.

Let us now turn our attention a little to the general principles here laid down. These are two. In thus patiently enduring undeserved suffering from a regard to the divine will, our Lord set an example to his people; and to the imitation of this example Christians are expressly called.

The first of these principles is stated in these words: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." 'Ye servants, who have froward masters, are suffering; but remember ye are not the only sufferers, Christ also suffered; suffered undeservedly, suffered patiently, suffered piously, leaving you an example that ye should follow in his steps; he did all this with the intention of showing you what you might expect, and how you should behave.'

It is quite plain, that within certain clearly definable limits, our Lord's character and conduct is the great exemplar after which his followers are to fashion theirs. They are commanded to have the mind in them that was in him. They are to think as he thought: they are to feel as he felt: they are to "walk as he also walked." They are to be "in the world as he was in the world." "To follow him," is the comprehensive term which describes all the varied duties of discipleship. In running the christian race, we are constantly to "look to him" as the "exemplar as well as the rewarder." [3]

Whatever in qualification or function belonged to him as a person invested with an office altogether peculiar, that of Mediator between God and man, the Saviour of sinners, and possessed of supernatural powers, fitting him to accomplish the great ends for which he was invested with that office, is obviously not to be considered as exemplary. Within that circle none must attempt to walk but he. It would be folly and impiety to attempt to expiate sin, either our own or other men's; or, without a divine commission, to work miracles, or to do what, when done by our Lord, obviously went on the supposi-

[1] John xviii. 11; xii. 27, 28. [2] Baxter.
[3] Phil. ii. 5. 1 John ii. 6; iv. 17. John xii. 26. Heb. xii. 2.

tion of his possessing a species of authority and knowledge which do not, which cannot, belong to his followers, to forgive sins, or to pronounce on the spiritual state and eternal destiny of individual men.

But in the great leading principles of our Lord's conduct, supreme love to God, disinterested love to man, there can be no doubt that he is our exemplar; and, supposing him placed in our circumstances, we are always to think, and feel, and act, as he would have thought, and felt, and acted. There may be some difficulty in certain cases, though they are of rare occurrence, in saying, whether a particular action of our Lord, recorded in the evangelical history, is to be, to the letter, imitated by us: but there can be no difficulty in the case before us; for the mode of conduct referred to is just the natural expression of those great principles of love to God, and love to man, by which, in common with Christ, all Christians should be animated and guided; and we have the express declaration of an inspired writer, that in submitting to undeserved suffering, and in enduring it patiently and piously, it was the intention of our Lord to exhibit to his people a picture of the trials which they might expect to meet with, and a pattern of the manner in which they ought to sustain these trials. This fact, of itself, then, sufficiently shows that Christians are bound not only to admire, but to imitate, their Lord, in meekly and piously submitting to undeserved suffering.

This is made still more evident by the second general principle laid down in the text. To this meek, pious submission to suffering, in imitation of Christ, Christians are expressly called. "Hereunto," to this, "are ye called;" that is, when you were called to be Christians, you were distinctly told that you should meet with suffering, with undeserved suffering, and that you would be expected to bear it in a meek, pious spirit. What says our Lord? "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word which I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord; if they have persecuted me, they will persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. In the world ye shall have tribulation. These things have I spoken to you, that ye should not be offended," stumbled, when they come to pass; thinking it strange, as if some strange thing had happened to you. "Behold I tell you before."[1] And what say the apostles? They assure Christians that it is "through much tribulation that they are to enter into the kingdom;" and that "all who will," who are determined to, "live godly in this world, must suffer persecution." They bid them "count it all joy when they are brought into manifold trials;" tell them that is needful that they "for a season be in heaviness through these manifold trials;" caution them against counting fiery trials strange things, and exhort them when they meet with these to "rejoice that they are partakers of Christ's sufferings." And as to the manner in which these afflictions are to be borne, this is their calling: "Let patience have its perfect work."

[1] John xv. 18–20; xvi. 33.

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." "Be patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."[1]

Having thus shortly illustrated the facts stated, 'Christ suffered, he suffered undeservedly, he suffered patiently, he suffered piously;' and the general principles stated, 'In thus meekly and piously enduring undeserved suffering, Christ has set an example to his followers which they should imitate; and, To this imitation of Christ's example in meek, pious endurance of undeserved suffering, they are expressly called;' we proceed to show the bearing that the two, taken in connection, have on the enforcement of the duty which the apostle is here enjoining on christian servants in peculiar circumstances. As there is nothing either in the duty enjoined, or in the motives enforcing it, peculiar to the situation of servants, as both are equally applicable to all Christians when exposed to undeserved suffering from their fellow-men, it may serve a good purpose, in the succeeding observations, to treat the subject in this more extended view.

It clearly follows, from the facts stated, and the principles laid down, that Christians need not wonder, and ought not to be discouraged, when they meet with undeserved suffering from the world; that they should be careful that all the sufferings they are exposed to from the world be indeed undeserved sufferings; and that they ought to submit to these undeserved sufferings in a spirit of meek forgiveness towards those who inflict them, and of humble, hopeful resignation to HIM by whose appointment they are subjected to them.

I observe, then, in the first place, that Christians need not wonder, and ought not to be discouraged, when they meet with undeserved sufferings from the world. Christ suffered—suffered without deserving suffering—suffered from those from whom kindness, not injury, had been merited by him. If Christ thus suffered, is it strange that Christians should thus suffer? So far as they deserve the name, they are like Christ; they have his Spirit; they speak like him; they act like him. The world in the midst of which they live is substantially the same as the world in the midst of which he lived. How can they expect, then, to be otherwise treated in it, or by it, than he was? Can they deserve ill usage less than he did? Can they merit kindness more than he did? What is the unreasonableness and unkindness implied in treating even the best of them ill, compared with that implied in treating him ill? This ill treatment by the world, without a good reason, is one of the proofs that we belong to Christ. If the world love us out and out, it is a proof that we are its own; for the world thus loves none but its own. "Can the Christian choose but to have the same common friends and enemies with his Lord? Could he be gratified with the friendship of that world which hated and murdered his Master, and, if he were here, would hate and murder him over again? Would he have nothing but kindness and ease, where Christ had nothing but enmity and trouble? Would he not rather refuse and disdain to be so unlike the Lord?"

"There is a family on earth
Whose Father fills a throne;

[1] Acts xiv. 22. 2 Tim. iii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 6; iv. 12, 13. James i. 4. 1 Pet. v. 6.

But, though a seed of heavenly birth,
On earth they're little known.
Where'er they meet the public eye,
They feel the public scorn;
For men their fairest claims deny,
And count them basely born.

"But 'tis the King who reigns above
That claims them for his own—
The favored objects of his love,
And destin'd to a throne.
Were honors evident to sense
Their portion here below,
The world would do them reverence,
And all their claims allow.

"But, when the King himself was here,
His claims were set at naught;—
Would they another lot prefer?
Rejected be the thought.
No; they will tread, while here below,
The path their Master trod—
Content all honor to forego
But that which comes from God."[1]

I remark, in the second place, that Christians should be careful that all the sufferings they are exposed to from the world be indeed undeserved sufferings. Christ suffered for us, not for himself: "He did no sin, no guile was found in his mouth." His sufferings were, in the sense we have already explained, undeserved sufferings; and in thus suffering, he set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Every sufferer has not fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. He who brings suffering on himself by his folly and sin, manifests not likeness, but unlikeness to the Saviour. He does not follow in his steps. He travels in a different, in an opposite, path from that in which he travelled. A Christian has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, "fills up what is behind of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus,"[2] only when his sufferings are like Christ's, "sufferings for righteousness' sake," or at any rate sufferings unprovoked, undeserved. All suffering, as coming from God, is deserved. The holiest man on earth, though he should be the most afflicted, is punished less than his iniquities deserve. But Christians must take care that, so far as men are concerned, their sufferings are undeserved sufferings. Christian servants, who have froward masters, are to take care that, if buffeted, they be not buffeted for their faults. Christians must take care that, however much evil their enemies may do them, they may have no evil thing to say truly of them. They must so conduct themselves, as that their enemies, like Daniel's, shall not be able to find anything against them, "except concerning the law of their God."[3] None of them must "suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or even as a busybody in other men's matters." When they suffer, let it be as Christians, innocently, undeservedly. Then shall they have no cause to be ashamed, but rather to "glorify God on this behalf." Being "partakers of Christ's sufferings they may well rejoice, for when his glory is revealed, they shall be glad also with exceeding joy."[4]

[1] Kelly. [2] Col. i. 24. [3] Dan. vi. 5. [4] 1 Pet. iv. 13.

I observe, in the third place, that Christians should submit to the undeserved sufferings to which they are exposed in a meek, patient, forgiving spirit. When Christ suffered, not on his own account, when he suffered undeservedly, having done no sin, no guile having been found in his mouth, "when reviled, he did not revile again, when he suffered, he threatened not," and in this he hath "set us an example, that we should follow his steps." We do not act like Christians, for we do not act like Christ, when we make the fact that our sufferings are undeserved an excuse for impatience under them, or revengeful thoughts and wishes in reference to their authors. Christians can be said to have fellowship with Christ in their undeserved sufferings, only when they endure them, as he endured his, and requires them to endure theirs; when they "love their enemies, do good to them that hate them, bless them that curse them, and pray for them who persecute them and despitefully use them;" when they do not seek to avenge themselves, when they are not "overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." [1] Such is the course Christians should follow, for such is the law, such the example of their Lord. And there is an additional reason, very touchingly urged by the apostle, in his Epistle to Titus, why they should thus be "gentle, showing all meekness to all men," even those who are most unreasonably unjust and wicked to them; "for they themselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." [2]

I observe in the last place, Christians should patiently endure the unmerited sufferings to which they are exposed, in a spirit of pious resignation. Christ, when he personally submitted to undeserved sufferings, "committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously," and in this too he hath "set us an example that we should follow his steps." In his sufferings he saw the appointment of his Father. However unjust these sufferings were as coming from man, they were just as coming from Him. They were the expression of holy displeasure at the sins of men, whose place he, by his own most voluntary consent, occupied. In number and severity they were just what He willed them to be; he believed He would sustain him under them, deliver him from them, and make them the means of fully accomplishing him as the Captain of Salvation, and he committed himself unreservedly into His hands, persuaded that He would do all things well.

In like manner Christians are to see in the men of the world who treat them unjustly and unkindly, "the hand," "the staff," "the rod" of Jehovah; and of all the afflictions produced by their instrumentality to say, "This cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, wonderful in counsel, excellent in working." They are to recollect that though they have not deserved this, though they may have deserved the very reverse, from those who maltreat them, they deserve this, far more than this, at the hand of God: "It is of his mercies that they are not consumed." They are to remember that both as creatures and redeemed creatures, he has an undoubted right entirely to manage their affairs. They are to believe that he orders all things well and wisely; that he "will not suffer them to be tried above what they are able to

[1] Matt. v. 44. Rom. xii. 21. [2] Tit. iii. 2.

bear;" that he will sustain them under their afflictions; that he will make them work together for their good; work out for them "a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." And under the influence of these convictions, they, when suffering according to the will of God, like their Lord who, when suffering according to the will of God, "committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously," are to "commit the keeping of their souls to God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."[1] Thus have I endeavored to bring out the force of the motive to patient endurance of undeserved suffering on the part of Christians, grounded on that example of our Lord, to the imitation of which they are called in their high and holy calling.

2.—*Christians called to patient suffering, as a constituent part of that holiness, to secure which was a great end of Christ's expiatory sufferings.*

But the apostle represents our Lord's sufferings not only as exemplary, but also as expiatory; and he represents them in the latter, as well as the former aspect, as affording powerful motives to the performance of the duties which he is enjoining. He says, not only 'perform the duty of patient pious endurance of undeserved suffering, "for hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps;" ' but also, 'perform this duty, "for hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for you, himself bearing your sins in his own body on the tree." ' "That Jesus Christ is, in doing and suffering, our supreme and matchless example, and that he came to be so, is a truth; but that he is nothing further, and came for no other end, is a high point of falsehood: for how should man be enabled to learn and follow that example, unless there was more in Christ; and what would become of that great reckoning of disobedience that man stands guilty of? No, these are too narrow. He came to bear our sins in his own body on the tree; a body prepared for him, and given to him to bear this burden, to do this as the will of the Father, to stand for us in the room of all offerings and sacrifices. And by that will, says the apostle, we are sanctified, by the offering of the body of Christ once for all."[2]

To explain the statement made by the apostle respecting the sufferings of Christ, viewed as expiatory, and to show its force as a motive to the discharge of the duties which he is enjoining, are the objects I have in view in the remaining part of this discourse.

The statement made by the apostle naturally divides itself into three parts: When Christ suffered for us he himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree; when he thus suffered, it was, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: and the effect of this is that we are healed by his stripes: we, who were like sheep going astray, are thus brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. The first part of the statement describes the nature; the second, the design; the third, the consequences, of our Lord's sufferings for us. Let us attend to these important topics in their order.

[1] Isa. viii. 5. Psal. xvii. 14. 1 Cor. x. 13. 2 Cor. iv. 17. 1 Pet. v. 19. [2] Leighton.

And, first, let us attend to the account which the text gives us of the NATURE of our Lord's sufferings. When he suffered for us, "he himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." These words plainly intimate that the sufferings of our Lord were *penal*, that is, they were the manifestation of the displeasure of God against sin: when he suffered, "he bare sin;" that they were *vicarious*, that is, they were the manifestation of the displeasure of God against the sin, not of the sufferer, but of men in whose place he stood, for he had no sin; "he bare our sins:" and that they were *expiatory;* that is, they were intended for, and effectual for, the purpose of expiating, or making atonement for, the sins on account of which they were inflicted, laying a foundation for the pardon of these sins in a way consistent with the perfections of the Divine character and the principles of the Divine government. He bare them that he might bear them away.

I need not say that "the tree" here means the cross, the accursed tree, just as we call the gibbet, the fatal tree. I am not sure that our version of these words, "he bare our sins on the tree," fully and exactly brings out the apostle's idea. The thought which the English words naturally suggests is this, Christ bare our sins *on* the cross. He suffered the penalty of our sins, and made expiation for them when he was crucified, and by being crucified. Now crucifixion, and the sufferings endured under crucifixion, were no doubt a part of the penalty of our sins, a part of the price of our salvation, but they were only a part of it. The inward agony of Gethsemane, equally with the pain and the shame of Calvary, was the payment of the ransom of man. The whole of our Lord's sufferings, from the moment he became capable of suffering, till the moment he became incapable of suffering, when on the cross he gave up the ghost, were that adequate expression of the Divine displeasure against sin, which reconciles the exercise of mercy with the claims of justice; and he as really, though not so obviously, bare our sins when he lay a helpless infant, in the manger in Bethlehem, as when he hung, an agonized man, on the accursed tree. The words admit, perhaps require, certainly have received, from some of the ablest scholars, and the soundest divines, a slightly different rendering, which brings out this important truth: "He himself bare our sins in his own body *to* the tree."[1] It is the same word that in the verse before us is rendered *on*, that in the following verse is rendered *to*, "Ye are returned *to* the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." This, then, we apprehend, is the apostle's statement, "He himself bare our sins in his own body *to* the tree."

There are two questions which must be answered in order to our fully apprehending the meaning of these words: What are we to understand by our Lord, when he suffered for us, "bearing our sins to the tree?" and what is the import of the phrase, "He himself in his own body" bare our sins to the tree?

Let us then inquire, what are we to understand by our Lord's

[1] Ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον. *Vide* Robinson on Ἐπί, iii. 6. (ι) and (β). Matt. iii. 13; xii. 28; xxii. 34. Acts iv. 26. Luke iii. 2. 2 Thess. i. 10. 1 Pet. iii. 12. Answering to the Heb. אֶת. Psal. xxxiv. 16. Sept.

bearing our sins to the cross. Our sins are represented here as a burden which had been laid on our Lord, and which he bore to the cross, where he got rid of the burden. Now, what are we to understand by "our sins?" What by their being laid on our Lord? What by his bearing them, bearing them to the cross?

"Our sins" here are our liabilities to punishment on account of our violations of the Divine law, and the necessary consequences of these liabilities; in other words, guilt in the sense of binding over to punishment, and punishment itself. "Our sins," meaning by that phrase our acts of violation of the Divine law, cannot by any power, not even that of God, be transferred from us and laid on another. It must always be true that we committed them. It never can be true that another committed them. Neither can our sinfulness, our culpability, our blameworthiness, in committing those acts be removed from us, or transferred to another. It must always be true that *we*, we alone, were to blame for our violation of the Divine law. It never can be true that in this sense our guilt can be transferred to another; but liability to punishment, and the punishment to which we are liable, may be transferred from us, and laid on another, and the statement in the text obviously goes on the supposition that "our sins," in this sense, were laid on our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what do we mean when we say that our sins in this sense were laid on Christ? We mean, that by a Divine appointment, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the God-man, was, with his own most free consent, subjected to the liabilities to punishment which man's sins had incurred; and to the punishment, that is, to the evils manifestative of the Divine displeasure at the sin of man, which necessarily rose out of these liabilities. This is the truth which is taught us when it is said, that when "we all like lost sheep had gone astray, and had turned every one to his own way," God made to meet on his righteous servant, "the iniquities," the ill-deserts, the liabilities to punishment, "of us all." And the consequence was, "exaction was made." *He* not *we* became answerable; and "it pleased the Lord to bruise *him*," and "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." The same truth is stated, when it is said, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law;" and when it is said "God made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us?" *sin* there meaning, a guilty person not in the sense of a culpable person, but a person, by Divine appointment, liable to evils manifesting the Divine displeasure against sin, just as *righteousness* in the antithetical clause means a righteous person, a person standing clear of all claims for punishment at the hand of the Divine law, and enjoying the acceptance of the Supreme Lawgiver. It is still the same idea, when it is said, "Christ became a curse," that is, accursed, doomed to endure evils which the law denounces against transgressors, "for us," in our room, who were "a curse," accursed, doomed to punishment. Laying our sins on our Lord, is the same thing as what is ordinarily expressed by imputing our sins to him.[1]

[1] Isa. liii. 4–7. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13. It is acute remark of CAMERO:—"Si quis dicat 'Christum pro nobis factum esse peccatum et maledictum' idem certo dicitur formaliter, sed significandi modus et considerandi diversus est; nam, cum Christus dicitur fac-

Now, if we distinctly apprehend what is meant by laying our sins on Jesus Christ, we can have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by his bearing or carrying these sins. It means that as he, by Divine appointment, stood in our room, he incurred our liabilities, he was exposed to, and actually endured evils which we had deserved, and which were the expression of the Divine displeasure against our evil deserts; and that all the multiplied and multifarious evils that he was exposed to, were the consequence of his, by Divine appointment, occupying this place, and being charged with these liabilities.

This fearful load of responsibility and of suffering, our Lord "bare to the cross." The cross was the term of his humbled life and of his vicarious endurance. The words before us, are substantially equivalent to, "he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."[1] He continued obedient, till he had exhausted all the demands of the law on him, as the victim of human transgression, in offering up to God his completed sacrifice. He "carried our sins" during the whole of his humbled state; and still laden with them, he submitted to be nailed to the cross, in its shame, and agonies, and unknown conflicts, consummating the great work of expiation; and in his dead body hanging on it, intimating, according to the statute of the Mosaic law, "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," that he had been liable to the vengeance of public justice, and that he had now fully paid the debt with which he had been charged, "restored that which he had not taken away."

He carried our "liabilities to the tree:" they were there crucified with him: they expired with him: they were buried with him. He rose again, but they did not: they are buried forever in his grave. "It is finished," said the Saviour; and the Supreme Ruler nailed the bond, which had been fully paid, to the cross. "The handwriting which had been against us" was blotted out forever. He thus finished the work which the Father gave him to do. He completely did his will, in "the offering of his body once for all." He "finished transgression, made an end of sin, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."[2] So much for the import of the expression, Christ has borne our sins to the cross.

Let us now, in a sentence or two, unfold the import of the somewhat peculiar phraseology: "He, *his own self*, bare our sins *in his own body* to the tree." There is here, I apprehend, a tacit contrast between our Lord and the Levitical priesthood. Aaron and his sons are said to "bear the iniquity of the congregation," "to make atonement for them before the Lord:"[3] but this they did, not by presenting themselves victims, but by presenting, as the representatives of the people, the sacrifices on which the sins of the congregation had been laid: they did not lay themselves, but these sacrifices, on the altar. But Jesus "Christ being come, a High Priest of good things to come, not by the blood of bulls or of goats, but by his own blood, obtained eternal redemption for us: He purged our sins by himself." He

tus esse pro nobis *peccatum*, notatur relatio et σχέσις pœnæ ad culpam, cum vero dicitur *maledictum*, notatur pœna simpliciter."—Opera, p. 518.

[1] Phil. ii. 8. Μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

[2] John xix. 30. Col. ii. 14. Dan. ix. 24. Heb. x. 9, 10; ix. 26.

[3] Lev. x. 17.

carried them in his own person to the altar of justice; and by his own sufferings and death, made expiation for them. "He offered *himself*, without spot, to God."[1] It was this which gave efficacy to his sacrifice. It was because it was "He himself," the Only-Begotten of God, "in his own body;" in a human nature, infinitely dignified by connection with the Divine, prepared for him for this very purpose, to suffer, and die in our room, that he was able to carry our sins, even to the cross; and by bearing them there, to bear them away completely and forever. The meaning of the whole passage may be summed up in these words: Jesus Christ, being the Son of God, has, by his vicarious sufferings and death, fully expiated the sins of men.

Let us now turn our mind a little to the account here given us, of the DESIGN of our Lord's expiatory sufferings. "Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, might live unto righteousness." It has been usual to consider these words as meaning, that Christ expiated our sins, that we, through the influence of his Spirit (a channel for the communication of which is opened up by the atonement), "having died to sin," that is, having been delivered from the love of sin, having had our sinful propensities mortified, may live a holy life, such a life as is consistent with righteousness, such a life as the righteous law of God demands. The passage has been considered as exactly parallel with the declaration, that "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."[2] A closer examination of the passage will persuade us, that the apostle's meaning is somewhat different from this.

There can be no reasonable doubt, that the "sins" to which Christians are represented as dead, through the expiatory sufferings of Christ, are the very same "sins" which, in these expiatory sufferings, He bare and bare away. Now, we have seen, those "sins" are liabilities to punishment. The direct reference, then, is not to the depraving power, but to the condemning power, of sin, which is the source, the foundation, of its depraving power. To be "dead to sins," is to be delivered from the condemning power of sin; or, in other words, from the condemning sentence of the law, under which, if a man lies, he cannot be holy; and from which, if a man is delivered, his holiness is absolutely secured. "To live unto righteousness," is plainly just the positive view of that, of which "to be dead to sins" is the negative view. 'Righteousness, when opposed to 'sin,' in the sense of guilt or liability to punishment, as it very often is in the writings of the Apostle Paul, is descriptive of a state of justification. A state of guilt is a state of condemnation by God; a state of righteousness is a state of acceptance with God. To live unto righteousness, is in this case to live under the influence of a justified state, a state of acceptance with God; and the apostle's statement is: Christ Jesus, by his sufferings unto death, completely answered the demands of the law on us, by bearing, and bearing away our sins, that we, believing in him, and thereby being united to him, might be as completely freed from our liabilities to punishment; as if we, in our person, not he himself, in his own body, had undergone them; and that we might as

[1] Heb. ix. 11, 12, 14. [2] Tit. ii. 14.

really be brought into a state of righteousness, justification, acceptance with God, as if we, not he, in his obedience to death, had magnified the law, and made it honorable; and that thus delivered from the demoralizing influence of a state of guilt and condemnation, and subjected to the sanctifying influence of a state of justification and acceptance, we might "serve God, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit;" "Serving him without fear;" "Walking at liberty, keeping his commandments."

The sentiment of the apostle is the same as that which his "beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him," states and illustrates more fully in the first part of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; where he shows us, that Christians are by faith united to Christ, as dying, dead, raised again; and that the moral transformation of their character, is the natural and necessary result of their being, as it were, united to Christ in his dying, and in his rising, and in his new life.[1]

The ultimate design of the atonement, in reference to man, is to form him to a holy character; but its direct design, with a reference to this, is to bring him out of a state of guilt and condemnation, into a state of pardon and acceptance. Had not Christ died, men could not have been pardoned; and man remaining unpardoned, must have remained unsanctified. Since Christ has died, the man who by faith is interested in the expiatory efficacy of his sufferings and death, is restored to the Divine favor; and if restored to the Divine favor, must, in the enjoyment of the influence of the Holy Spirit, the communication of which is the great proof of the Divine favor, be conformed to the Divine image. The tendency of the expiatory sufferings of Christ to gain their design, must be obvious to every one, who reflects, that they removed otherwise insurmountable obstacles in the way of man's holiness; that they opened up a way for the communication of that influence, which is at once necessary and sufficient to make men holy; and that, as a display of the Divine character, and the subject of a plain, well-accredited revelation, they furnish the fit instrumentality for the Holy Spirit to employ, in making men holy. These are but hints on a subject, which would require a volume to do justice to; but if followed out, they will be found to give important lights in the investigation of the principles of christian doctrine, and in the guidance of the exercises of christian experience.

Let us now attend to the account here given of the EFFECTS of the expiatory sufferings of our Lord. "By his stripes ye are healed;" and though "ye were as sheep going astray, ye are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The effects of the atonement on those who, by faith, are interested in its saving efficacy, are described by two instructive figures: the healing of diseased persons, and the reclaiming of lost sheep; both of them borrowed from the liii. chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah, to which also the apostle refers, when speaking of our Lord bearing our sins.

"By his stripes ye are healed." Sin is often represented in Scripture as a disease. It makes men miserable in themselves, useless, sometimes loathsome, often dangerous to others; and its natural and

[1] Rom. vi. 1–14.

certain termination, if allowed to run its course, is death, the second death, eternal death. Various, endlessly-various methods have been invented for curing this disease. The best of them are mere palliatives. The only effectual cure is that here mentioned: "the stripes" of the righteous servant of God. This is a cure which it never could have entered into the mind of man to conceive; and even when made known, it seems foolishness to the wisdom of this world: the disease of one man healed by the stripes of another! the death of Jesus on a cross, the means of making men holy and happy! Yet so it is: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God stronger than men."[1]

Man's disease is a deep-rooted one. It arises out of the circumstances in which he is placed. It has affected the inmost springs of life, and it discovers itself by an endless variety of external symptoms. The "stripes" of the Great Physician are a remedy which answers all these peculiarities. The expiatory sufferings of Christ, when the sinner believes, change his state. They take him out of the pestilential region of the Divine curse, and translate him into the health-breathing region of Divine favor. In the Divine influences, for which they open the way, is giving a powerful principle of health, which penetrates into the very first springs of thought, and feeling, and action; and in the views which these sufferings give us of the holy benignant character of God, the malignity of sin, the vanity of the world, the importance of eternity, there are furnished, as it were, remedies fitted to meet and remove all the various external symptoms of this worst of diseases.

This was not a matter of speculation, but of experience, with those to whom Peter was writing. "By his stripes ye are healed." You were once depraved and miserable; you are now comparatively holy and happy: and you know how the change was effected. It was by the expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ: His stripes have healed you.

The same truth is brought before the mind under another figure, in the words that follow: "Ye were as sheep going astray: but ye are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The natural state of mankind is like that of strayed sheep. It is a state of error, of want, of perplexity, of dissatisfaction, of danger. It is a state that gives no promise of improvement. The strayed sheep, if left to itself, will wander farther and farther from the fold, till it perish of hunger, fall over the precipice, or be devoured by the wild beast. Such is the state of all men by nature; but all true Christians have, like those to whom the apostle was writing, "returned to the Shepherd and Bishop,"[2] that is, overseer "of their souls." They have been reclaimed from their wanderings, and have found peace and security, the green pasture of heavenly truth, the still waters of heavenly consolation, under the care of Him who is the good Shepherd, the kind, faithful Overseer of souls.

And how were they brought back? It was by the expiatory suffer-

[1] 1 Cor. i. 25.

[2] The use of the word Bishop, appropriated, as it now is in the English language, to a particular ecclesiastical officer, of whom the New Testament knows nothing—the Diocesan Hierarch of the Papal and Anglican churches—is here obviously improper; and were not our ears familiar to it, would be even ludicrous.

ings of their Saviour. "The good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep."[1] Without this, they could not have been reclaimed. It is the voice of his blood; the blood "that speaketh better things than that of Abel;"[2] that penetrates their hearts and leads them to return. It is his love and his Father's, manifested in these sufferings, when apprehended and believed, that bring them near him, and keep them near him. Every Christian knows this.

It is an excellent use which one of the greatest of the Fathers[3] would have us to make of this statement: "We were as sheep going astray: but are returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." "Let us not despair of those who yet wander, but rather earnestly pray for them. We once wandered as well as they; the grace which brought us back can bring them back. The number of the saints is to be increased from among the unholy. Those who to-day are goats may be sheep to-morrow; and the tares of to-day may to-morrow be good grain. With God, through Christ, nothing is impossible."

Having thus very cursorily considered the apostle's statement respecting the nature, design, and effects of our Lord's sufferings, viewed as expiatory, let us now still more cursorily show the force of this statement considered as a motive to those duties which in this paragraph he is enjoining. Did Jesus Christ, God's Son, bear our sins? Was he treated, both by God and man, as if he had sinned? Did he bear our sins in his body to the cross, patiently enduring all that was necessary to their expiation? Is it not, then, reasonable and right that we should devote ourselves *to* him who devoted himself *for* us? Should we not patiently do and suffer whatever he calls us to do and suffer? If he, to expiate our sins, voluntarily took upon himself "the form of a servant," and in that form submitted to such toil and suffering, should not his people who, in the course of providence, are placed in the situation of servants, from a regard to Him, cheerfully do the duties, and submit to the hardships, to which they may be exposed? Did he expiate our sins, "that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness?" that we might be freed from the irritating, demoralizing influence of a state of condemnation, and be subject to the tranquillizing, sanctifying influences of a state of pardon and acceptance with God? Should not we, then, who profess to believe in him, and through that faith to be interested in these saving effects of his atoning sacrifice, show by our cheerfully doing and suffering all the will of God, that in our case the expiatory sufferings of Christ have, indeed, served their purpose, that we are "dead to sin, that we are alive to righteousness?" Have the great ends of the atonement been in some degree answered in our experience? Have we obtained some measure of spiritual health and welfare by virtue of the stripes which he received from God and men for our sakes? Surely, then, we should not take in ill part the shame and suffering we may be exposed to, especially that which we meet with on his account, for bearing his name, sustaining his cause.

It is well said by an old Scotch divine: "None can with patience and cheerfulness suffer wrongs for Christ, but they who do by faith apply the virtue of his sufferings for them to their own souls, for the

[1] John x. 11. [2] Heb. xii. 24. [3] Augustine.

pardoning and subduing of sin, quickening of their hearts in holiness, and healing of their spiritual distempers: which effects of his death are so sweet to them that partake of them, that they cannot but cheerfully endure the worst that men can do against them, rather than do the least thing that may be offensive to him."[1]

Have we, in consequence of the good Shepherd laying down his life for us, been reclaimed from our wanderings, joined to his flock, and blessed with his pastoral care? Should we not, then, entirely resign ourselves to his guidance, and follow him fearlessly and readily through paths, however rugged and thorny, while he is conducting us to his heavenly fold? Should we not have perfect confidence in his love and power, manifested in dying for us, and in reclaiming us from our wanderings, and therefore readily do whatever he commands, because he commands it; cheerfully submit to whatever he appoints, because he appoints it?

Thus have I endeavored to bring out the meaning and force of the apostle's statement respecting the nature, design, and effects of the sufferings of Christ, viewed as expiatory, as a motive to christian duty generally, and especially to the patient endurance of such undeserved suffering as Christians may be exposed to. The practical effect of those powerful motives on our minds and conduct will be proportioned to the degree in which we understand and believe the great fundamental principles of the doctrine of christian faith on which they are founded; and neglect of, or carelessness in duty, and impatience under affliction, are to be traced to want or weakness of faith in these principles.

Let us, then, not cease to pray, each for himself, and all of us for each other, and "desire, that we may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and abounding in the knowledge of God: strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."[2]

[1] Nisbet. [2] Col. i. 11–14.

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE CONJUGAL DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED.

1 Pet. iii. 1–7.—Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Divine revelation has often been compared to the sun; and it would be easy to trace out many striking, pleasing, instructive analogies between these two glorious works of God. To one of these analogies, suggested by that portion of Scripture which now lies before us, I would, for a moment, solicit your attention. The sun, from his high throne in the heavens, diffuses light and heat and genial influence over all the earth, smiling benignantly on the lofty mountain and the humble vale, the populous city and the obscure village, the fertile field and the wilderness, the noble's mansion, with its richly cultivated demesne, and the peasant's cottage, with its surrounding barren waste. "His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."[1] The sun is a common good. It is for the world, for all the world.

It is thus, also, with Divine truth enshrined in the Bible. It pours forth direction, and motive, and warning, and comfort suited to all men of all countries, all ages, all conditions; to the young, to the middle-aged, and to the old; to the rich and to the poor, and to those to whom neither poverty nor riches have been given; to the prosperous and to the afflicted; to the happy and to the miserable; to man in the lowest and in the highest station in society and state of civilization; to the savage and to the sage; to the monarch and to the slave. It is the moral sun of the world of humanity, shedding pure light, holy influence over the whole of its diversified surface. No class of men is overlooked; every individual, in whatever circumstances he may be placed, may find suitable instruction here.

In the verses immediately preceding our text, we see the light of inspired truth shining most benignantly on the humble dwelling of the

[1] Psal. xix. 6.

christian slave, and guiding and sustaining, and cheering him, amid his unmerited sufferings and ill-rewarded toils; and in the text itself, the sun of righteousness sheds beams full of healing on the very sources of society, in those directions, by complying with which, families might be made the abodes of a tranquil enjoyment and holy happiness, which would lead the mind backward to Eden, and forward to heaven.

The words that lie before us are a farther illustration of the general injunction given to Christians, to "have their conversation honest among the Gentiles," that is, so to conduct themselves as that even their heathen neighbors should be constrained to approve and respect them. The manner in which this injunction was to be obeyed, was by a careful performance of relative duties, especially such as they owed to their heathen connections. Of the excellence of such a course of conduct they were qualified judges, but they were not of the principles of "our most holy faith," nor of duties of a more strictly religious and christian character. All Christians, therefore, were to yield a cheerful, loyal subjection to civil authority, as lodged both in its supreme and subordinate administrators; to cherish and display a becoming respect for all who, on whatever ground, had a claim on their respect: to cultivate and manifest that peculiar regard to the christian society, which, in Christians, even heathens could not help perceiving to be becoming and proper; and to show a reverence for the supreme civil power, based on, and limited only by, the reverence due to Him who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Such Christians as stood in the relation of servants, especially to heathen masters, were carefully to discharge the duties and submit to the hardships connected with the situation in which they were placed. The natural tendency of such conduct, such "good works," habitually and perseveringly maintained, was to overcome the prejudices of their heathen neighbors, to convince them that they had misapprehended the true character both of their religion, and of themselves; and to constrain those "who spoke against them as evil-doers, to glorify God in the day of visitation."

Another way in which the same desirable object was to be sought, was by those who stood in the relation of husbands and wives, conscientiously discharging the duties which grew out of their union. And when we reflect on the manner in which the duties of the conjugal relation were neglected and violated among heathens; how much there was of the harshness of the tyrant in the character of the heathen husband, and of the baseness of the slave in the character of the heathen wife; how much pollution and cruelty prevailed, in what should be the sanctuary of purity and love—we cannot help seeing that few things were more calculated to strike, and to strike favorably, heathen observers, than the exemplification of the genius and power of Christianity, in softening the character of the husband, and elevating, at once, the condition and character of the wife; and in thus introducing an order, and purity, and endearment, and enjoyment into the domestic circle, not only beyond what heathen philosophy had accomplished, but beyond what it had ever dreamed of.

Such is the connection, we apprehend, in which the interesting

passage I have read, is introduced; and it contains a brief statement, and a powerful enforcement, of the conjugal duties; first of the duties of the wife, and then, of the duties of the husband.

The whole of the conjugal duties, like indeed all duties, may be and are "summed up in one word, love." "Husbands," says the apostle Paul, "love your wives;" and the same apostle commands Titus, to take care "that the aged women teach the young women to love their husbands."[1] But the appropriate form of love, in any particular case, when embodied in action, depends on the relation in which the party who loves stands to the party beloved. Parents are to "love their children," and to show that they do so by "bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Children are to "love their parents," and to show that they do so, by "being obedient to them in the Lord." Masters are to love their servants, and to show this by being kind and considerate in their requisitions and arrangements; and servants are to love their masters, and to show that they do so, by being obedient and submissive, diligent and faithful.[2] In the like manner, husbands and wives are to "love one another, with a pure heart fervently;" and they are to manifest that love by a careful performance of the duties which rise out of, and are suited to, the relation in which they respectively stand to each other. What these are, we are told by the apostle, in the passage before us. The duties of the wives are, subjection, chaste conversation coupled with fear, and an adorning of themselves; which is described, first, negatively, and then positively; and the motives urging to the performance of these duties are two: first, that thus they might, probably, be the means of converting their heathen husbands; and, secondly, that they would follow the example of holy women in former ages. The duties of the husbands are, dwelling with their wives according to knowledge, and giving honor to them; and the motive urging to the performance of these duties are three: first, that the wife is 'the weaker vessel;' secondly, that their wives, as Christians, are, equally with themselves, heirs of the grace of life; and thirdly, that an opposite mode of conduct would hinder their prayers. Let us attend, then, in their order, to these statements and enforcements of the conjugal duties.

PART I.

I.—THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN WIVES.

And first, of the duties of wives. Their duty is thus stated and enforced, in the first six verses. "Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; when they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear; whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great

[1] Eph. v. 25. Tit. ii. 4. [2] Eph. vi. 4, 1, 9, 5.

price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

§ 1.—*Subjection.*

The first duty of christian wives, mentioned by the apostle, is SUBJECTION. "Be in subjection to your own husbands." The apostle Paul enjoins the same duty in similar terms: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord: Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as is fit in the Lord;" and he commands Titus, in "speaking the things that become sound doctrine," to exhort "that the aged women teach the young women to be obedient to their own husbands."[1] I believe, that in the conjugal relation, matters are best managed when there is little display, or assertion of superiority, or rule, on the part of the husband, but where the spouses "submit themselves one to another, in the fear of God."[2] There can, however, be no doubt, that God, both as the God of nature, and the God of revelation, has distinctly indicated that the rule of the domestic society is vested in the husband. Hear the declarations of Scripture: "Adam was first formed, and then Eve. The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. The Lord said, it is not good for man to be alone, I will make him a help-meet for him. The man is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man." Even in a state of innocence the husband had rule; and after the introduction of sin, of which the apostle gives this account, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression," the Divine will was thus declared: "And to the woman he said, Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."[3]

This appointment is in entire concurrence with sound reason and true expediency. "In all communities, if there is to be order and peace, there must be rule. There can be no happiness without peace, no peace without order, no order without subordination, no subordination without subjection. Perpetual strife would arise from equality, or contested superiority."[4] To secure the advantages of society in all its forms, authority must be established, and submission enjoined. The only question in such a case is, where should the authority be lodged? And in the case of the domestic society it would seem that the question admits of only one answer.

The subjection of the wife is extensive, but by no means unlimited. It is subjection "in the Lord;" such a subjection as becomes a christian woman who feels her own responsibilities to the One Master in heaven. "His authority is primitive, and binds fast;" as Leighton says, "All other have their patents and privileges from him. He therefore is supremely and absolutely to be obeyed by all." Besides,

[1] Eph. v. 22. Col. iii. 18. Tit. ii. 5. [2] Eph. v. 21.
[3] 1 Tim. ii. 13. 1 Cor. xi. 7–9. Gen. ii. 23. 1 Tim. ii. 14. Gen. iii. 16. [4] Jay.

"it is not the submission of slaves to their master, or of subjects to their sovereign, or of children to their father. It is a subjection that has more of equality in it, accords with the idea of a helper, a companion and a friend; springs originally from choice, and is acquiesced in for the sake of propriety and advantage." [1] It has been very justly remarked, "Whatever bitterness there is in this subjection arises from the corruption of nature in both parties: in the wife of a perverse desire rather to command, or at least a repining disinclination to obey; and this increased by the disorder and imprudence and harshness of the husband in the use of his authority. But in a christian woman, the conscience of divine authority will carry it, and weigh down all difficulties; for the wife considers her station. She is set in it; it is the rank the Lord's hand has placed her in, and therefore she will not break it. Out of respect and love to him, she can digest much frowardness of a husband, and make her patient subjection an offering to God. 'Lord, I offer this to thee. For thy sake I humbly bear it.'" [2]

It is a happy thing when the personal excellence of a husband makes submission a compliance with inclination; but a christian woman, even when her husband is not so wise or reasonable in his requisitions and arrangements as she could wish, yet, because by God's providence, he is her own husband, and God's command is to be subject to her own husband, she is subject to the marital authority, not only "for wrath, but for conscience' sake." Such conduct is acceptable to God, and generally draws down tokens of his approbation. By following this course, many a woman has spent a life of respectability and usefulness, who, by acting otherwise, would neither have been respectable nor useful; and many a family has been a scene of order and peace, where otherwise there would have been nothing but confusion and every evil work. Besides, it is the submissive wife who generally gets most of her own will.[3]

§ 2.—"*Chaste conversation coupled with fear.*"

The second duty of christian wives, mentioned by the apostle, is "chaste conversation coupled with fear." Conversation here, and uniformly in the Scriptures, does not signify mutual talk, colloquial intercourse, familiar discourse, but habitual conduct, manner of life. Chaste conversation means much more than abstinence from gross vice, direct violation of the seventh commandment; actual infraction of the marriage covenant. Indeed such things were not even to be named among Christians. The reference is rather to an avoidance of everything that has even the appearance of an approximation, to the indulgence or display of sentiments and feelings, inconsistent with that purity of mind, that chastity of heart, which the christian law requires. There is, as has been justly observed, an audacity of countenance, a boldness of look, a levity of discourse, a freedom of manners, a forwardness of behavior, a challenging, obtrusive, advancing air, very unbecoming the sacred decorum which should mark

[1] Jay. [2] Leighton.
[3] Casta ad virum matrona parendo imperat.—Publius Syrus.

the character of christian females. Their conduct must be such as to awe the licentious and keep them at a distance; and their language must be free from all foolish talking and jesting, which is not convenient, does not suit with their character and profession, as holy women. "Diffidence, the blushings of reserve, the tremulous retiring of modesty; the sensation that comes from the union of innocence and danger; the prudence which keeps far from the limits of permission; the instinctive vigilance which discerns danger afar off; the caution which never allows the enemy to approach near enough, even to reconnoitre,"[1]—all this, which virtuous women understand far better than any man can describe it to them, is included in chaste conversation.

This "chaste conversation" is to be "coupled with fear." Some suppose that "fear" here is respect to their husbands; others that it is that timidity which I have just noticed. I rather think that here, as at the 18th verse of the preceding chapter, "fear" is the fear of God, reverence for the divine authority, fear of the divine displeasure. Their chastity, like all their virtues, was to have a religious character, being based on faith, and sustained and nourished by those principles which naturally spring from faith of the truth respecting the Divine character. Genuine religion is the grand security of all the virtues; and it was of importance that these christian wives of heathen husbands should make it plain that their chaste behavior, which their husbands could not but appreciate, was the result of that religion which they neglected or opposed.

§ 3.—*The adorning themselves with inward ornaments.*

The third duty enjoined on christian wives refers to the manner in which they were to adorn themselves: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;[2] but let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The love of ornament belongs to the species; but it is a principle peculiarly strong in the female part of it. That a maid should forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire, is spoken of by the inspired writer as a very unlikely thing.[3] There is nothing wrong in this principle itself. It serves important purposes. The want of it is felt as a serious drawback. A sloven is disagreeable, a slattern intolerable. Christianity makes no war with anything in any of man's natural principles but the abuse of them. Its object is not to extirpate them, but to prune them, to train them, to make them yield good fruit. Thus it is with the love of ornament, which is natural to the female mind. The apostle gives directions as to the guidance and regulation of this principle. These are both negative and positive. Let us look at them in succession.

[1] Jay.

[2] Ἐνδύσεις ἱματίων. Lyra gives an odd reason for the use of the plural here:—"Solent enim feminæ TOT induere vestes, TORQUE tunicis, peplis, palliis, iisque sericis, byssinis, preciosis et sumptuosis se ornare, ut unius ornatus multis feminis sufficere possit."

[3] Jer. ii. 32.

The negative direction is, "Let not the adorning" of christian wives —and the remark is applicable to christian women generally—"let not their adorning" be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold,[1] and of putting on of apparel. Some have considered these words, and the corresponding words in the First Epistle to Timothy, "In like manner that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array,"[2] as an absolute prohibition of christian women, artificially to dress their hair, to wear ornaments composed of gold, silver, and precious stones, or to clothe themselves in any garment but what is plain and unadorned. I think christian woman may very easily fall into more dangerous misinterpretations of the Scripture than this; yet I have no doubt it is a misinterpretation. The words before us do not contain a positive prohibition of all ornamental dress; but they are a statement that these ornaments were not for a moment to be compared to ornaments of a higher kind. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," means, 'I prefer mercy to sacrifice.' And the passage before us means, 'I pay more, far more, attention to the adorning of your minds and hearts with christian graces and virtues, than of your bodies with jewels and splendid apparel.'

At the same time, I have no doubt that these words were intended to suggest some very important hints as to the principles on which christian women should regulate their dress. Christian women should carefully avoid everything which has the appearance of immodesty or levity in dress. Abandoned women were in the apostle's time distinguished by their very great attention to external ornament. Christian women, on the contrary, must adorn themselves in modest apparel. It is most unbecoming that a woman, professing godliness, should wear the attire of a mere woman of the world, much more the attire of a harlot. No fashion can sanction such a mode of dress.

Christian women should also avoid undue expense in their mode of dress. It cometh of evil when christian females aspire to, and indulge in, a richness of apparel and ornament, which is unsuitable to their rank in life, and which curtails their means of christian beneficence, especially in clothing the poor. "Such excessive costliness," says the good archbishop, "both argues and feeds the pride of the heart, and defrauds, if not others of their dues, yet the poor of their charity, which in God's sight is a due debt, too; and far more comfort shalt thou have on thy death-bed to remember that at such a time, instead of putting lace on my own clothes, I helped a naked back to clothing; I abated somewhat of my former superfluities to supply the poor with necessities; far sweeter will this be than to remember that I could needlessly cast out many pounds to serve my pride, while I grudged a penny to relieve the poor."

There is still another hint which this negative injunction is intended and fitted to give—that dress should not occupy an undue share of the attention and time of christian wives. The apostle intimates that it is a very subordinate thing. No christian woman will suffer the

[1] Drusius supposes the reference to be to golden necklaces, and would supply τοῦ τραχήλου.
[2] 1 Tim. ii. 9.

adorning of her body to be either her business or her delight She will not render herself responsible at the bar of God for the work of hours, days, weeks, months, in a long life of years, which might, which ought to, have been otherwise and more worthily employed, in a way more becoming rational, responsible, immortal beings. Listen to the good archbishop again: "To have the mind taken and pleased with such things is so foolish and childish a thing, that if most might not find it in themselves, they would wonder at many others of years and common wit, not twice children, but always; and yet truly it is a disease that few escape. It is strange upon what poor things men and women will be vain and think themselves somebody; not only upon some comeliness in their form or features, which, though poor enough, is yet a part of themselves, but of things merely without them; that they are well apparelled, either richly or well in fashion. Light, empty minds are as bladders, blown up with anything; and they that perceive not this in themselves are most deluded; but such as have found it out, and abhor their own follies, are still hunting and following them to beat them out of their hearts, and to shame themselves out of such fopperies. The soul fallen from God hath lost its true worth and beauty, and therefore it basely descends to these mean things, to serve and dress the body, and to take share with it of its unworthy borrowed ornaments, while it hath lost and forgotten God, and seeks not after him, knows not that he alone is the beauty and ornament of the soul, and his Spirit and his graces its rich attire."

This naturally leads to the apostle's positive injunction regarding ornaments. It is in these words: "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God, of great price." The general meaning here is plain enough. There is some difficulty, however, in fixing the construction of the passage, which is obviously, to some extent, elliptical. The precise meaning, of course, varies according as the words are construed. Some would construe them thus: "Let your adorning not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart," the new creature, 'the inner man,' the holy character which springs out of the faith of the truth, "in that which is incorruptible," which is, not like gold and jewels put on thy corruptible body, but which inheres in the incorruptible mind, "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." Others would construe them thus: "Let the hidden man of the heart, in contrast to the outward man of the body, be adorned with the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, in contrast with the corruptible ornaments of gold and apparel—an ornament, which in the sight of God is of great price, in contrast with the estimation in which men hold external ornaments." The latter construction seems to me to bring out most exactly the apostle's thought, which let us now endeavor shortly to illustrate.

"The inner man of the heart" is just the heart, which is the inner man. The heart, in its ordinary figurative sense, is the mind of man considered both as the seat of intellect and of affection, the soul. Christian women, indeed all Christians, whether men or women, should

be most solicitous about the welfare and the ornament, not of the outer man, the body, but of this inner man, the soul. And the ornaments with which it is to be adorned must be suitable to its nature; they must be incorruptible. The soul is indestructible and immortal; and so should its ornaments be. The appropriate ornaments of the soul are truth and holiness, knowledge, faith, hope, love, joy, humility, wisdom, prudence, fortitude, gentleness, and all the other gifts and graces of the Spirit; these are the jewels with which the inner man should be adorned. The outward man is corruptible. Dust it is, and unto the dust must it return. However stately and strong, and graceful and beautiful, it must, ere long, be a mass of putrefaction, a ghastly skeleton, a heap of bones, a heap of dust, indistinguishable from the dust by which it is surrounded. And all its ornaments are, like itself, destructible. Moth and worm destroy the richest garments; silver and gold are perishable things. Gold, though tried with the fire, perishes. But neither time nor eternity can destroy either the soul or its appropriate ornaments. The soul is immortal; these ornaments are not put on it; they are essential qualities of itself, and while it endures, they must endure.

There is particular notice taken of one of these imperishable ornaments, of which it was the duty of the christian wives to see that they were possessed, the "ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit." Nothing is more ornamental to a christian wife than a meek and quiet spirit. No deformity is more unsightly than its reverse; a discontented, fretful, peevish, domineering spirit. Hateful everywhere; it is nowhere more hateful than in woman; in no woman so hateful as in a wife. Hear the declaration of the inspired Israelitish sage: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman, are alike. It is better to dwell in the corner of a housetop alone than with a brawling woman in a wide house. It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman. Whoso hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of the right hand, which bewrayeth itself." [1] How beautiful, on the other hand, is the christian woman who, amid the endlessly perplexing details of domestic management, maintains an unruffled temper, and in christian patience possess her soul. It is a lovely picture which has been drawn of a christian wife, as "one who can feel neglects and unkindnesses, and yet retain her composure; who can calmly remonstrate and meekly reprove; who can yield and accommodate; who is not 'easily provoked,' and is 'easily entreated;' who would endure rather than complain, and would rather suffer in secret than disturb others with her grief." [2]

This ornament, and the whole class it belongs to, is "in the sight of God of great price." One of the reasons why many females are so fond of fine clothes and rich ornaments is, that these are admired by others. But by whom are they admired? By men, and most admired by the least wise and worthy of the species, men whose opinion is little worth. But this ornament of the hidden man of the heart is "in the sight of God of great price." He who alone has

[1] Prov. xxvii. 15; xxv. 24; xxi. 19.
[2] Jay. "A courage to endure and to obey."—TENNYSON.

wisdom admires it. Yes, "he looks to, he dwells with, the meek, the humble, the lowly heart." And his approbation is of more value than that of all the other beings in the universe. "Not she who commendeth herself, not she whom men commend, is approved, but she whom God commendeth." The meek and quiet spirit, like faith, will "be found to glory and honor and praise at the coming of our Lord Jesus."[1] In that day, the man who, for his genius, learning or successful ambition, excited the wonder of nations, and whose praises were celebrated from age to age, and through widely distant countries, but who never obtained, because he never sought, the honor that cometh down from above, shall be filled with shame, covered with contempt; while the woman of a meek and quiet spirit, who in the retirement of very lowly domestic life, performed conscientiously the laborious duties, and sustained patiently the varied trials of her humble sphere, from regard to the authority of God, and under the constraining influence of the love of the Son, shall be seen to be "glorious within," one whom the King of kings delights to honor, and to whom he will say, in the presence of assembled men and angels, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"Men think it poor and mean to be meek. Nothing is more exposed to contempt than the spirit of meekness. It is mere folly with men; but that is no matter: this overweighs all their disesteem: 'It is with God of great price.' And things are indeed as he values them, and no otherwise. Though it be not the country's fashion, yet it is the fashion at court, yea, it is the king's own fashion: 'Learn of me, says he, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' And when he girds on his sword, and rides forth prosperously, it is 'for meekness, and truth, and righteousness.' Some that are court-bred, will send for the prevailing fashions there, though they live not at court: and though the peasants think them strange dresses, yet they regard not that; but use them as finest and best. Care not what the world say; you are not to stay long with them. Desire to have both your fashions and your stuffs from heaven. The robe of humility, the garment of meekness, will be sent you. Wear them, for his sake who sends them you. He will be pleased to see you in them; and is this not enough? It is never right in anything with us till we attain to this; to tread on the opinion of men, and eye nothing but God's approbation."[2]

It may perhaps be worth while noticing, before closing this part of the discourse, that the greatest of all the Grecian philosophers, Plato, has a passage which strikingly resembles that which we have been illustrating: "Behavior, and not gold, is the ornament of a woman. To courtezans, these things, jewels and ornaments, are advantageous to their catching more admirers; but for a woman who wishes to enjoy the favor of one man, good behavior is the proper ornament, and not dresses. And you should have the blush upon your countenance, which is the sign of modesty, instead of paint; and worth and sobriety, instead of gold and emeralds."[3] It is impossible not to notice the similarity; but it is as impossible not at the same time to notice

[1] Isa. lxvi. 2. 2 Cor. x. 18. [2] Leighton. [3] Plato de Repub.

the superiority. The philosopher is entirely of the earth, earthy. The apostle brings the authority of God, and the power of the unseen world, distinctly into view. While Plato leads wives to seek exclusively the honor which comes from men, Peter teaches them to seek the honor that cometh down from God; the true judge of excellence, the great fountain of honor.

II.—MOTIVES ADDRESSED TO CHRISTIAN WIVES TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES.

§ 1.—*The probability of Converting their Husbands.*

Let us proceed now to the consideration of the motives by which the discharge of these duties is recommended. The first of these motives is drawn from the probability that, by following the course enjoined, the christian wife might be the means of converting, to the faith and obedience of Christ, her heathen or Jewish husband. Christian wives are to be in subjection to their husbands; they are to have a chaste conversation, mingled with fear; they are to adorn themselves, not so much outwardly, by having the body ornamented, with plaiting of hair, wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel, as inwardly, by having the mind adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; in order that such husbands as have not been converted by the word, may be won to the faith of Christ by "the conversation," that is, the character and conduct of their wives.

The apostle here obviously goes on the supposition, that a christian woman may have for her husband a man who is not a Christian. Then, as now, the wife might be an heir of glory, and the husband a son of perdition. The closest natural alliance might be associated with the most complete spiritual disunion; and between persons who are so intimately connected, as to be "no longer twain, but one flesh," in reference to spiritual character, privilege, and hope, there might be a great gulf fixed. They who have civilly all things common, spiritually may have nothing common: no common principles, no common feelings, no common hopes or fears, joys or sorrows.

This is very far from being a desirable state of things. On the part of the converted person, it must be the source of constant and most fearful anxiety; and this just in proportion to the degree of his or her piety, and of the love cherished to the unconverted partner. It is a state of things into which a very rare peculiarity of circumstances can make it even innocent for a Christian to enter. Some christian moralists have held that there is no combination of circumstances which can do this; but that in every case, for a Christian to contract marriage with an unbeliever, is a direct violation of the law of Christ. To this opinion I was myself at one time an adherent; but on further reflection I must say, that this appears to me to be taking higher ground than the Scripture warrants. The two passages of Scripture commonly quoted in support of this sentiment, when carefully examined, will be found incapable of answering the purpose. The first of these passages: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,"[1]

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 14.

obviously refers to church fellowship, and not to the marriage relation, as must be obvious to every person, who reads it in its connection. The second of them, where the christian widow is said to be at liberty to marry whom she will, "only in the Lord,"[1] does not mean that she must marry a christian man, or remain unmarried; but that, in using her liberty, she ought to act as a person "in the Lord," in a manner becoming a saint: just as when christian children are required to obey their parents, in the Lord, the meaning is, not that they obey their parents if they be Christians, but that they obey their parents as Christians are bound to do.

It is quite a conceivable case, that it may be a Christian's duty to marry, where it may be impossible for him to obtain a christian partner; and it is to be recollected, that marriage is a secular, not a religious relation. At the same time, these cases are of very rare occurrence; and generally speaking, the Christian who does not marry a Christian, does not act like a Christian. In all ordinary circumstances, for a Christian to marry a person, with the distinct understanding that that person is not a Christian, or indeed without satisfactory evidence that he or she is a Christian, is equally criminal and unwise. The principles and the histories of Scripture are equally opposed to such connections; and I believe that there are few violations of christian duty that are more frequently, indeed all but uniformly, and severely, punished than this. The consideration which, in some cases, has blinded the eyes of individuals to the impropriety and folly of such conduct; the hope of becoming useful, in the highest sense of the word, to an object of affection, by becoming the means of conversion, is plainly most fallacious. We must not do evil that good may come: and it should be remembered, that if there may be conversion on the one side, there may be perversion on the other; and in the whole circumstances of the case, the latter may be the more probable of the two events. The sad result of the marriages of the ante-diluvian sons of God with the daughters of men, is recorded in Scripture, as a beacon, to warn all succeeding generations against such unnatural and unhallowed connections.

But a christian woman may, without fault on her part, find herself the wife of an unconverted man. It is a possible thing that she may have been deceived in her estimate of the character of him whom she has chosen for her companion through life; the mask of religion having been assumed to serve a purpose (and sometimes it has so much the appearance of reality, that it is not wonderful that mistakes, sad mistakes, are committed by the inexperienced); or, what is of much more frequent occurrence, and to which, in all probability, the apostle refers, both may have been in a state of unconversion when the marriage relation was formed, but a change in the wife may have taken place subsequently, she, under divine influence, having been led to embrace a vital christianity, while her husband remains destitute of, or opposed to it, "dead in trespasses and in sins;" she becoming a subject of Jesus Christ, while he continues a rebel. What probably would have prevented, what, in ordinary circumstances, ought to have prevented, marriage, does not dissolve it. The christian wife is not

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 39.

warranted to withdraw from her unconverted husband on that ground. She must continue with him, and perform to him all the duties of an affectionate and respectful wife. She must be in subjection to her own husband, probably more in subjection than ever; for her conversion will probably have greatly widened her view of conjugal duty, and deepened her sense of its obligation.

The situation referred to is a very trying one, and the apostle proposes a very powerful and encouraging motive to a discharge of its difficult duties. He holds out the hope of the christian wife becoming the means of the salvation of her husband. He supposes a very bad case: he supposes that the husband has not "obeyed the word," that is, "the word of the truth of the gospel;" he has resisted its claims on his attention, faith, and obedience. The christian wife, no doubt, has endeavored to bring him within the reach of the christian preacher's voice: it may be, he refused to come; or he came, but departed unimpressed, unbelieving: it may be, scoffing and blaspheming. The christian wife, if she act in character, will use more private means to bring her husband under the influence of the word, by reading the Scriptures and other good books, if she can get him to listen to them; and by wisely and affectionately, with her own living voice, endeavoring to convey to him the saving truth; but all may be in vain, all often has been in vain, apparently worse than in vain; so that all direct attempts to effect a change have to be abandoned, as likely to do mischief rather than good, hardening prejudice, provoking resistance.

Still the christian wife must not despair; especially she must not be weary in the well-doing of a conscientious performance of her conjugal duties; and the motive, the all-powerful, the sweetly constraining motive, so full of power over the principles of the Christian, and the affections of the wife, is: and "what knowest thou, O woman, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" Even without the word, which he will not obey, he may be gained by thy chaste conversation, obviously based on and sustained by christian piety. It has been said justly, that "men who are prejudiced observe actions a great deal more than words."[1] The cheerful, affectionate, constant performance of all conjugal duties, especially when it is made quite plain that this is the result of christian principle, is fitted to make impression even on unthinking and insensible men. The difference, for the better, which conversion has made on the relative conduct of the wife, almost necessarily leads the husband's mind to what has produced it, and gives birth to the thought, 'that cannot be a bad thing which produces such good effects.' His prejudices are gradually weakened. By and by, he, it may be voluntarily, commences to talk on a subject on which formerly he had angrily forbidden all conversation, accompanies his wife to the christian assembly, and ultimately listens to, believes, and obeys the word which he had formerly rejected. "A life of undissembled holiness, and heavenliness, and self-denial, and meekness, and love, and mortification, is a powerful sermon, which, if you be constantly preaching before those who are near you, will hardly miss of a good effect. Works are more palpably significant than words alone."[2] This is the natural tendency of a quiet,

[1] Ἄφωνον ἔργον κρεῖσσον ἀπάκτου λόγου.—Œcumenius. [2] Baxter.

cheerful, persevering performance of conjugal duty to unconverted husbands; "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward;" and, by the accompanying blessing of the good Spirit, this has not unfrequently been its blessed effect.

There is something very beautiful in the phraseology in which the conversion of the Jewish or heathen husband is described. He is said to be "won." He was lost; lost to true happiness; lost, continuing in his present state, for eternity; but when he is brought to the knowledge of the truth, he is won, gained, gained to himself, gained to the Saviour, "added," as Leighton says, "to His treasury, who thought not his own precious blood too dear to lay out for this gain."

The motive here presented to a truly christian woman is certainly a very cogent one. Its force has been finely brought out by a great living preacher: "The salvation of a soul! the salvation of a husband's soul! O seek that you lose not him who is so dear to you, 'in the valley of the shadow of death.' See that the parting at death be not a final parting. Let your friendship survive the desolations of time, and be renewed to infinite advantage beyond the grave. To the tie that nothing but death can sever, seek to add one which defies even his power to cut asunder. Think, O wife, of the happiness which will result from the success of your endeavors. What pleasure will attend the remainder of your days, now of one heart and of one mind. How sweet will be the counsel you can now take together. How delightful to go to the house of God in company. How enlivening to add the *our* Father of the family altar to the *my* Father of the closet, which witnessed your wrestling with God, that he whom you loved might also be led to say *my* Father. And what will be your joy and crown of rejoicing in that day when, before assembled men and angels, he will say: 'Blessed be the providence which attached us in yonder world, and has still more united us in this. "The woman thou gavest me to be with me," led me not to "the tree of knowledge of good and evil;" but to "the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God."'[1] The practical effect which the pressing of this motive should have on the christian wife is excellently expressed by one of the fathers of the church: "Let a prudent woman first of all endeavor to persuade her husband to become a partaker with her in those things which lead to blessedness; but if he prove impracticable, let her still apply with all diligence to a virtuous life, in everything yielding obedience to her husband, and doing nothing contrary to his will, except in such things as are reckoned essential to virtue and salvation."[2]

§ 2.—*The example of holy women in former ages.*

The second motive presented by the apostle to christian wives to stimulate and encourage them in the performance of their conjugal duties is, that in doing so they would follow the example of holy women in former ages: "For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves. Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as

[1] Jay. [2] Clem. Alex.

long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." There is a natural tendency in the human mind to regard with veneration the characters of those distinguished for sanctity who lived in distant ages; and it is an additional recommendation to any course of conduct urged on us, that it was followed by those to whom we have been accustomed to look up as models. The good women whose names are recorded in the book of God, such as Sarah and Hannah, were with the pious Hebrews objects of affectionate admiration. They deserve to be so. Their sanctity and purity of manners, for they were "holy," joined to their piety, for they "trusted in God," made them objects of the love, and fit models for the imitation, of their descendants. They were in "subjection to their own husbands," and had a "chaste conversation, coupled with fear." They adorned less the seen man of the body than the hidden man of the heart; and their ornaments were not so much golden jewels or costly apparel, as the meek and humble spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. No one who is not thus characterized can share the honor which belongs to these illustrious females. Every one who is thus characterized does share their honor. However inferior in her talents, however obscure in her situation, however poor in her circumstances; every such woman, every such wife, is recognized as a daughter of Sarah, a sister of Hannah, and the other holy women who "built the house of Jacob, and did worthily in the families of Israel." [1]

Sarah is particularly noticed as having obeyed Abraham, and as having shown her respect for him, by calling him lord. The particular instances in which Sarah obeyed Abraham, are not distinctly specified by the apostle. It has been supposed that the reference may be to her obeying Abraham's voice, when he obeyed Jehovah in leaving the land of their nativity, where they had many relations and probably abundant possessions, to go forth into a land of which they knew no more than that Jehovah should afterwards tell them of it; and to her yielding up Isaac, her only son, the son of the promise, the son of her old age, to the disposal of his father, when he received the strange command to take him and offer him up for a burnt-offering. If in these two trying cases Sarah did yield a ready obedience to her husband's expressed will, she well deserves to be represented as a model to wives in succeeding ages. The reference, however, does not seem so much to particular instances as to the habit of obedience. Indeed, in one instance at least, she seems to have carried her disposition to obey her husband to an extreme; for when he instructed her to equivocate in Egypt, and represent herself as his sister, she would have done well respectfully to have replied, "I must obey God rather than my husband." Her exemplary character as a wife was manifested also in the manner in which she was accustomed to address her husband; she called him lord. Though of the same rank with her husband, a member of the same family, and distinguished by peculiar honors as the mother of the son of the promise, she never thought herself above the humblest duties of her station, but habitually reverenced her husband.

[1] Ruth iv. 11.

It deserves notice as a proof how ready God is to approve of, and to testify approbation of, what is good in the conduct of his people, that the speech of which this compellation was a part, was in substance an expression of unbelief respecting the promise of God, for which at the time she was severely reprimanded; yet here, after the lapse of so many ages, she is spoken honorably of, for the only good thing in that unhappy speech, a becoming expression of respectful regard for her husband. How readily does God pardon the sins of the upright in heart! And how highly does he estimate, how graciously does he accept, their poorest services! He does "not forget" them.[1]

Sarah was highly honored among the pious Jews as the wife of Abraham, the father of the faithful and the mother of Isaac, the son of the promise. A daughter of Sarah was to the Jewish women an appellation of similar desirableness and dignity, as to a Jewish man, a son of Abraham. All truly christian women were daughters of Sarah, as all truly christian men were sons of Abraham: "Children, according to the promise; not of the bondwoman, but of the free."[2]

There is more true honor connected with this spiritual lineage than springs from deriving our birth

> "From loins enthron'd, or sovereigns of the earth."[3]

Now this honor belongs to all christian wives "so long as they do well." While they discharge the duties of their station from proper motives, and in a proper manner, they will be reckoned the heirs of her faith, sharers in her honors; they will be blessed with obedient Sarah and faithful Abraham. The apostle's declaration goes on the same principle as our Lord's, "If ye were the children of Abraham, ye would do the works of Abraham."[4] 'Doing the works of Sarah, ye prove yourselves to be her daughters.'

The apostle adds, "And are not afraid with any amazement." There is some difficulty in fixing the precise meaning and reference of these words. I will state to you in a very few words what I consider as the most probable interpretation that has been given them. The best principles may be carried to extremes. The duties we owe to superiors are not likely to be performed with propriety and regularity, if we have not a respect for their persons and a fear of their displeasure; but this may easily become excessive. This fear of man in all its forms brings a snare. It was the duty of the christian wives of heathen husbands to respect and fear them; and to show this by a ready obedience to their lawful commands, a ready compliance with their lawful appointments; but they must not allow their fear of their husbands to lead them to neglect their duty as Christians, or to violate the law of their Lord and Master. This was a strong temptation, for heathen husbands were often very arbitrary; and the existing laws, as well as customs, put the happiness of their wives in their power to a degree of which, from the state of things which the progress of religion, and civilization, and law has produced in this

[1] Gen. xviii. 12. Heb. vi. 10.
[2] Gal. iii. 29; iv. 31.
[3] Cowper.
[4] John viii. 39.

country, we happily can form but an inadequate conception. So long as the will of their husbands did not run counter to the will of their Lord, they could scarcely be too submissive; but when they forbade what he commanded, or commanded what he forbade, then the reply must be ready to be respectfully made and steadily acted out, "We must obey God rather than man." 'I am under strong obligations to you, but I am under infinitely stronger obligations to him. I would not willingly incur your displeasure, but I dare not subject myself to his indignation.'

And so it must be still. Every christian wife must remember that she has higher duties than those she owes to her husband, even those she owes to her God and Saviour; and whenever these come, as they sometimes do, into competition, she must not be "afraid with any amazement," but calmly say, 'I would willingly do and suffer very much for my nearest and dearest earthly relation, but I will not sin for him. His lordship does not extend to my mind and conscience; as to these, I have one Lord, the Lord who bought me; my Master is in heaven.' In this case, as in every other of a similar kind, it is proper that the individual should carefully guard against mistaking humor for principle, and be very sure that the compliance with a husband's will is indeed incompatible with obedience to a Saviour's, before such a course is adopted; but when this is made clearly out to the conscience, there must be no hesitation; we must deny ourselves, our best, most useful, human affections, and follow Him. If in this sense a child do not hate his father, a brother his sister, a wife her husband, they are not fit for being Christ's disciples. In matters of conscience all Christians, whether men or women, whatever relation in domestic or civil society they may occupy, must be principled, decided, resolute, firm. All Christians of whatever sex, and in whatever station, must "add to their faith knowledge," to enable them to discern their various duties, to understand their various obligations and their comparative strength; "and to faith" and "knowledge," or enlightened faith, they must add "virtue," that is, fortitude to enable them at all hazards to perform the one and discharge the other.[1] They must learn not to be "afraid of man's terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in their heart, and make him their fear and their dread;" and fearing him they will know no other fear. An enlightened fear of God will equally lead a christian wife to yield all due respect and obedience to her husband, and to refuse that species and degree of respect and obedience which are due only to God.

This superiority to fear in matters of duty, seems spoken of as a point of resemblance to Sarah. It is plain from the slight hints we have in Genesis, that she was not deficient in firmness of character, which sprung out of the faith ascribed to her in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and the hope in God by which she, in common with the other holy women, was characterized.

It may not be improper to state that a somewhat different view has been entertained of the reference and design of this concluding clause. In the very passage where Sarah's respect for her husband, manifested in her calling him lord, is recorded, she is represented as, under the

[1] 2 Pet. i. 5.

influence of fear, denying the truth: "Then Sarah," it is said, "denied, for she was afraid." [1] To this, it has been supposed, that the apostle refers, as if he said, 'Imitate Sarah in what was good, but avoid her failings. Honor your husband, but guard against such fear as would lead you, like Sarah, acting incongruously with her character as a holy woman trusting in God, to deny the truth.' [2]

Such is the apostle's view of the duties of christian wives, and of the motives which ought to stimulate them to the habitual performance of them. As might be expected, there is a peculiar reference to the circumstances in which christian females were placed at the period in which the epistle was written, among the nations amid whom those Christians dwelt, to whom it was addressed; but in all its essential principles it is equally applicable to all ages and to all countries. The individual who realizes the force of these motives, and exemplifies these precepts, habitually in heart, temper, and behavior, whatever station she occupies, is a blessing to society, an ornament to the Church of God. Happy is the man who has such a wife. He who has found such a wife has found a good thing, and has obtained favor of the Lord. Happy are the children who have such a mother, happy the family who have such a mistress, happy the congregation which has many such members. "Such a gracious woman retaineth honor." "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let own works praise her in the gates." [3]

PART II.

Out of all the relations in which human beings can be placed to each other, whether as superiors, or inferiors, or equals, grow mutual obligations, and reciprocal duties. In no case is the one party free and the other bound. Each has his peculiar right, and each his peculiar duties. The child has rights, as well as the parent; the servant has rights, as well as the master; the subject has rights, as well as the magistrate; and, as a necessary consequence of this, the parent has duties as well as the child; the master as well as the servant; the magistrate as well as the subject. In none of the relations of human society, can the one party with truth say to the other, you are my debtor, but I owe you nothing. The debt of love is a debt which, though we should constantly be paying to all, we never can discharge to any. We must all ever owe love to all; and the particular form in which the various instalments of this inextinguishable debt are to be paid by one individual to another, depends on the relation which subsists between them, and is indeed just the appropriate duty of that relation. We find the apostle Peter applying this principle, in his

[1] Gen. xviii. 15.

[2] The meaning of this passage seems considerably elucidated by including ("as Sarah, whose children you are, obeyed Abraham") in a parenthesis, and connecting "doing what is good and alarmed with no terrors," with what goes before,—referring to "the holy women generally."—Vide "Translation" at the beginning of the volume.

[3] Prov. xxxi. 30, 31.

statements of the duties of the fundamental and primary relation of domestic life, that of husband and wife. He has stated and enforced the duties of the wife; he has taught the christian wife what she owes to her husband, even to her unconverted husband, and why she should be conscientious in discharging this debt. He has explained her duty, and the motive by which it is enforced. He now proceeds to show christian husbands that they have duties as well as rights; and that while they have important claims on their wives, their wives also have important claims on them; claims, certainly, not the less sacred and cogent, that they to whom they belong have, in comparatively rare instances, the means of authoritatively enforcing them.

I.—THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS.

The view of the duty of the husband to the wife, given by the apostle, is, like that given by him of the duty of the wife to the husband, accompanied with a statement of some of the motives which urge to its performance. My object, in the remaining part of this discourse, is to unfold the meaning of the apostle's injunctions, and to point out the appropriateness and force of the considerations which he adduces in support of these injunctions.

You will observe, that my object is not to give you a full account of the duties of husbands, and of the motives enforcing them. Had that been my design I should have taken for my subject the whole of the christian law, as laid down in the following passages of Scripture, passages which I hope every husband in this assembly has engraved on the tablet, not only of his memory, but of his heart: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, for he who loveth his wife loveth himself: for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless, let every one of you, in particular, so love his wife even as himself. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." [1]

My object is a much more limited one. Taking for granted, with the apostle, that the husbands addressed, were possessed of that peculiar affection, without the possession of the elements of which, the marriage relation ought never to be formed, and without the careful cultivation and steady development of which, the duties of that relation cannot be performed, nor its comforts enjoyed, I mean to confine myself to those manifestations of this principle, and those motives urging to these manifestations, to which the apostle's object naturally

[1] Eph. v. 25–33. Col. iii. 19.

led him particularly to advert, in showing the Christians to whom he was writing, living in the midst of heathens ignorant of their religion, how to "have their conversation honest among the Gentiles, that so with well-doing they might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." For this purpose he exhorts christian subjects and christian servants to be particularly attentive to their civil and domestic duties; for this purpose he exhorts christian wives to be exemplary in all their conjugal duties; and for this purpose he, in our text, exhorts christian husbands to "dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered."

A certain degree of obscurity is cast over this passage, by the manner in which it is construed in our version. I should think few intelligent persons have ever read the passage without feeling as if the first reason given for honoring the wife, were a somewhat paradoxical one. It seems very reasonable, that the christian husband should honor the christian wife, because she is equally with himself an "heir of the grace of life;" but it seems strange, that her being the weaker vessel should be assigned as a reason why she should be *honored*. That is a very good, a very persuasive reason, to sympathize with her, to help her, to be kind to her; but it does not seem to have much cogency as a reason for honoring her. On looking into the text, as it came from the apostle's pen, there appears no trace of this apparent incongruity. The words translated, "to the wife, as to the weaker vessel,"[1] and which might, with equal propriety, be rendered, "with the wife as with the weaker vessel," immediately follow the words, "dwell according to knowledge," and precede, instead of following, as from our version we would naturally suppose, the words, "giving honor." These are plainly intended to qualify the first clause, just as the words, "as being heirs of the grace of life," are intended to qualify the second. The wife being the weaker vessel is the reason why the husband should "dwell with her according to knowledge;" just as her being a fellow-heir of the grace of life, is the reason why he should honor her;[2] and the importance of preventing any hindrance to their prayers, is a motive equally bearing on both of the duties enjoined. The method, then, which seems best fitted to bring out the meaning and force of the text is, first, to explain the first injunction, "Dwell with the wife according to knowledge," and its appropriate motive: "She is the weaker vessel;" then the second injunction, and its appropriate motive: "Honor her, as she is a joint-heir of the grace of life;" and, finally, the concluding consideration, which is equally fitted for giving force to both these injunctions.

§ 1.—*To "dwell with the wife according to knowledge, as being the weaker vessel."*

Let us now proceed to the illustration of the first injunction, and its appropriate motive: "likewise ye husbands dwell according to

[1] Ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ.

[2] Ὡς bis hic ponitur: priore loco pertinet ad γνῶσιν, altero ad τιμήν. Γνῶσιν poscit *infirmitas vasis;* Τιμὴν *co-hæreditas* injungit.—BENGEL.

knowledge, with the wife, that is, each with his own wife, as being the weaker vessel." Let the husband dwell with his wife. Let him dwell with her according to knowledge. What is the meaning of these expressions? The expression, let the husband dwell with his wife, seems naturally to suggest the idea that, in the apostle's estimation, each family should have a separate habitation; that they should not only dwell in the same house, but that as every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband, every man and wife should have their own house. The son, when he becomes a husband, should "leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife." [1] This is the arrangement dictated by nature and reason, an arrangement seldom disregarded without uncomfortable consequences. Different households should have in all ordinary circumstances different houses. Many dishonorable things among the Gontiles, originated in the neglect of this arrangement.

But this, though apparently included in the injunction, does not exhaust its meaning. It plainly implies, that not only should the husband and wife have the same and a separate house, but that the husband as well as the wife should ordinarily, habitually, dwell in that house. Wive are, no doubt, peculiarly bound to be "keepers at home." That is their principal and all but exclusive scene of duty and usefulness; but husbands, too, are bound, in all ordinary circumstances, to make their house their home. "It is absurd," as has been justly said, "for those who have no prospect of dwelling together, to enter into the marriage state; and they who are already in it, should not be unnecessarily abroad." Circumstances may occur which may make absence from home, even for a considerable time, a duty on the part of the husband, but these are exceptions from the general rule. There is much force in the inspired apothegm, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." [2] "Those persons," says Baxter, "live contrary to the nature of this relation, who live a great part of their lives asunder as many do, for worldly respects: when they have several houses, possessions, or trades, and the husband must live at one, and the wife at the other, for their commodity sake, and only come together once in a week, or in many weeks. Where this is done without great necessity, it is a constant violation of their duties. And so it is for men to go to trade or live beyond sea, or in another land, and leave their wives behind them; yea, though they have their wives' consent, it is an unlawful course, except in a case of mere necessity or public service, or where they are able to say that the benefits are likely to be greater to the soul and body than the loss. The offices which husbands and wives are bound to perform for one another, are such as for the most part suppose them dwelling under the same roof, like the offices of the members of the body for each other, which they cannot perform if they are dismembered and divided." How can a man from home discharge his duties to his household? Family devotion, family instruction, family discipline, must all, so far as he is concerned, be neglected.

There are husbands who are seldom from home in the sense now

[1] Gen. ii. 24. [2] Prov. xxvii. 8.

explained, who yet are very deficient in the duty here enjoined, dwelling with their wives. Though never from home in one way, they are but seldom at home in another Their leisure hours are spent abroad. They seem fonder of almost any society than the society of their wives. It is a shrewd remark, which observation but too fully confirms, "when a married man, a husband, a father, is fond of spending his evenings abroad; it implies something bad, and predicts something worse."[1] To dwell with the wife is to associate with her as the husband's chosen companion and confidential friend. There are some husbands who never consult their wives, and even leave them to learn from a third person matters in which they are deeply concerned. This is not as it should be. He who enters into the spirit of the apostle's advice, will, amid the occupations of the day, please himself with the thought of enjoying his wife's society in the evening, as the best refreshment after his toils. Her presence will make his own mansion, however humble, far more agreeable to him than any other which he may occasionally visit. The anxieties and cares attendant on her maternal and domestic character he will endeavor to soothe and relieve. When she is happy he will be happy: when she is afflicted he will be afflicted. He will rejoice with her when she rejoices, and weep with her when she weeps. His heart will safely trust in her, and, by a constant interchange of kind offices, he will increase both in her and in himself that entire confidential esteem and love, which makes all relative duties easy and pleasant.[2] This is for the husband to dwell with the wife.

But what are we to understand by dwelling with her "according to knowledge?" These words may mean, Let the christian husband, in his intimate and habitual intercourse with his wife, conduct himself like a well-instructed christian man, who knows the law of Jesus Christ, and the powerful motives by which it is enforced. We rather think, however, that the meaning is, Let him conduct himself intelligently, wisely, prudently. There is no prescribing particular rules in a case of this kind. "Wisdom is profitable to direct;" and as it is profitable, so is it necessary. In every department of relative duty, wise consideration, prudent tact, is necessary; in none more than in the conjugal department. The peace of the family, the comfort, and even the spiritual improvement both of the wife and of the husband, depend on this holy discretion. This knowledge, or wisdom, will enable him to form a just estimate of his wife's character, of her talents, her acquirements, her temper, her foibles, and will lead him to act accordingly. Christian husbands should act "circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." It is the more necessary that such wisdom be exercised, from the difficulty of guarding equally against a foolish fondness, which suffers sin on the object of affection, and a forbidding harshness of demeanor, which disheartens and discourages. The wife is not a servant who can be dismissed; not an ordinary friend, who, if found unsuitable, can be quietly parted with. She is joined to thee by a bond which, in ordinary cases, nothing but death can dissolve. She is the mother of thy children; regard to her, regard to them, regard to thyself, all require thee to dwell with her ac-

[1] Jay. [2] Stennett.

cording to knowledge. Act wisely, and the results will be unspeakably advantageous. Act foolishly, and there is no saying what the consequences of this, even in one instance, may be. Beware of in any way injuring her; beware of in any way being injured by her. Seek to bless her, and to make her a blessing to you, to your children, to all with whom she is connected.

The apostle notices particularly one reason why the husband should dwell according to knowledge with the wife. She is "the weaker vessel." The word translated "vessel" seems here to mean framework or fabric. Both man and woman are a framework or fabric formed by God. Both are weak; but the woman is the weaker. Both in body and mind some women are stronger than some men; but, in ordinary cases, the female, in the human as in other species of living creatures, is weaker than the male. In delicacy of apprehension, both intellectual and moral, and in capacity of passive endurance, the woman's mind is often, I apprehend, far superior to the man's. But, generally speaking, the woman is the weaker fabric. She has a feebler corporeal frame; and her mental constitution, especially the sensitive part of it, is such as to require cautious, kind, even tender treatment from those about her. Therefore it is meet that her husband should sustain her weakness, and bear with her infirmities.

It is foolish and productive of mischief, to treat wives as if they were children. It degrades them in their own estimation, and prevents their improvement; but it is wise, and productive of the best consequences, to treat them as what they are, women, beings of keener sensibilities and feebler frames than ours; and to have a kind consideration for their peculiar privations and sufferings, their wearisome days and sleepless nights, their anxieties and sorrows, their watchings over our sick and dying children, and their angel-like ministrations to ourselves in the season of affliction. The feebleness of their frame should keep husbands in mind of the insecure tenure by which they possess them, and lead them to dwell with them, as they will wish they had done, when they must dwell with them no longer.

The apostle does not suppose a christian husband can be intentionally unkind to his wife; but he supposes that from want of consideration, he may do injury in a degree he little thinks, to one whom he loves; and therefore he puts him in mind that his wife is the weaker vessel, and that it is his duty to dwell with her "according to knowledge." Very worthy men, not at all deficient in good sense or in good feeling either, but not distinguished by tact or sensibility, need the hint; and a great deal of suffering, not the less severe that it is not designed, and cannot be complained of, might be saved if it were but attended to.

"It is well to mark how a passing word—
Too lightly said, and too deeply heard—
Or a harsh reproof, or a look unkind,
May spoil the peace of sensitive mind."[1]

[1] C. Fry.

§ 2.—"*To honor the wife as a fellow-heir of the grace of life.*"

The second injunction to christian husbands is, "Give honor to the wives as being heirs together," or joint-heirs "of the grace of life." Here, again, we have first the precept, and then the motive. The christian husband is to honor his wife. Some interpreters have supposed that the honor here spoken of is an honorable maintenance. There can be no doubt that the word "honor" is repeatedly used with this signification in the New Testament;[1] and there is as little doubt that it is the duty of a husband to give to his wife all the comforts which his circumstances in life can afford, and provide for her both while he lives, and, in all practicable cases, after his death; but we cannot look at the close of the sentence without perceiving that it is not to this that the apostle refers. It is such honor as properly belongs to the wife as "an heir of the grace of life." It is quite plain that the christian husband is supposed to have a christian wife; and he is not to treat her as the heathen treated their wives, or even as the Jews treated theirs. He is to view her as spiritually standing on the same level with himself, being in Christ Jesus, "where there is neither male nor female," any more than Jew or Greek, bond or free. He is to esteem her as "a child of God," "a daughter of the Lord God Almighty," "an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ Jesus." He is to love her, because Christ loves her, and because she loves Christ. He is to respect her as a living image of the Redeemer, having received out of his fulness grace for grace.

The apostle particularly notices, that the wives are to be honored as, equally with their husbands, heirs of the grace of life. "The grace of life." Grace is here favor, the favor of God; not in the sense of the principle in the Divine mind, but of some signal effect and manifestation of it. The grace or favor of life is that Divine grace or favor which consists in life. The "life" referred to is that eternal life which is "the grace to be brought to us at the coming of our Lord Jesus," "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," "the salvation that is in him with eternal glory." "Life is," as Leighton says, "a sweet word, but sweetest of all in this sense: That life above is indeed only worthy the name. This we have here, in comparison, let it not be called life, but a continual dying: an incessant journey towards the grave. If you reckon years, it is but a short moment to him who attains the fullest old age: but reckon miseries and sorrows, it is long to him who dies young." This life is the fruit of the Divine favor. It is the GRACE of life. "If we consider but a little," to quote the good Archbishop again, "what it is, what we are, that this is the grace of life, will quickly be out of question with us, and we shall be most gladly content to hold it thus, by deed of gift, and shall admire and extol that grace that bestows it."

Christian husbands and christian wives are equally heirs of this grace of life; and no consideration is so much fitted to lead a christian husband to honor his wife as this. It has been finely said: "This is that which most strongly binds these duties on the hearts of husbands and wives, and indeed most strongly binds their hearts together,

[1] Matt. xv. 6. 1 Tim. v. 17. Acts xxviii. 10. Τιμαῖς.

and makes them one. If each be reconciled to God in Christ, and so heirs of the grace of life, and one with God, then are they truly one in God, each with the other, and that is the surest and sweetest union that can be. Natural love hath risen very high in some husbands and wives, but the highest of it falls very far short of that which holds in God. Hearts concentrating on him are most excellently one. That love which is cemented by youth and beauty, when these moulder and decay, as they do soon, it fades too. That is somewhat purer, and so more lasting, that holds in a natural or moral harmony of minds; yet these likewise may alter and change by some great accident. But the most refined, most spiritual, and most indissoluble is, that which is knit with the highest and purest spirit. And the ignorance or disregard of this is the true cause of so much bitterness, or so little true sweetness, in the life of most married persons, because God is left out; because they meet not as one in Him. Loath will they be to despise one another that are both bought with the precious blood of one Redeemer, and loath to grieve one another. Being in him brought into peace with God, they will entertain true peace between themselves, and not suffer anything to disturb it. They have hopes to meet one day, where there is nothing but perfect concord and peace. They will therefore live as heirs to that life here, and make their present state as like to heaven as they can, and so a pledge and evidence of their title to that inheritance of peace which is there laid up for them. And they will not fail to put one another often in mind of these hopes and that inheritance, and to advance and further each other towards it. Where this is not minded, it is to little purpose to speak of other rules. Where neither party aspires to this heirship, live they otherwise as they will, there is one common inheritance abiding them, one inheritance of everlasting flames; and, as they increase the sin and guiltiness of each other by their irreligious conversation, so that which some of them do wickedly here on no great cause, they shall have full cause for doing there—curse the time of their coming together; and that shall be a piece of their exercise forever. But happy those persons, in any society of marriage or friendship, who converse so together here as those that shall live so eternally together in glory." [1]

The christian husband, when he realizes these truths, cannot but honor his christian partner; cannot but treat her with cordial respect, as one, equally with himself, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; already blessed with many invaluable heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ, standing in a most dignified relation to the great God our Saviour; animated by his Spirit and adorned by his image; and destined to be one day perfectly like him, their common life, when he appears in his glory, and to become an inheritor of that blessed world where they "do not marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." [2]

It is obvious that this is a motive, which in its full force can be felt only by a christian husband, in reference to his duty to a christian wife. But it suggests strong reason to the christian husband to do his duty, even in reference to an unconverted wife. She belongs to

[1] Leighton. [2] Matt. xxii. 30.

the race of which Christ is the Saviour. She is capable of becoming an heir of the grace of life; and her husband's discharge of conjugal duties, under the influence of the faith of the gospel, is well calculated to remove prejudice against vital Christianity; and in connection with other means for her conversion, which christian principle and conjugal love will induce him to employ, may very probably be blessed, to the joining them together in a union more intimate and sacred than even that of marriage; a union over which the severing stroke of death has no power. "How knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" [1]

II.—MOTIVE ADDRESSED TO CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS TO THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES: "THAT THEIR PRAYERS BE NOT HINDERED."

Having thus shortly illustrated the two injunctions, with the appropriate motives by which they are respectively enforced, let us, ere we close, shortly attend to the general consideration which bears equally on both these injunctions. Christian husbands are to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, and to give honor to them, "that their prayers be not hindered." It is plainly taken for granted here, that Christians habitually engage in prayer. "The heirs of life," as Leighton says, "cannot live without prayer: none of them is dumb; they all speak." They all seek intercourse with their heavenly Father. Having the spirit of adoption, they cry, Abba, Father. They pray in secret; and when two of these heirs are brought together in the closest of human relations, they pray together, and a great deal of their improvement and happiness depends on these prayers together and apart. Anything which hinders the latter materially interferes with the former. Now it is quite plain, that the neglect of conjugal duty on the part of the husband to the wife, is fitted to hinder both his own prayers and the prayers of his wife, and their common prayers. The temper that leads him to neglect his duty to his wife, unfits him for his duty to his God; and though human unkindness, even from our best human friend, should but lead us to go with greater alacrity to Him who is a friend at all times, yet the jars and contentions of husband and wife, are in their own nature calculated so to embitter the spirit of both, as to unfit for prayer, which should always be presented with holy hands, and must be offered without wrath if it is to be offered without doubting.

There seems in these words, a direct reference to family prayers.[2] How can they be attended to at all, if the husband do not dwell with his wife? how can they be usefully attended to, if they dwell not together in unity? How are they likely to come to that agreement in reference to things which they ask, and the temper and disposition in which they ask them, which is so necessary to prayer serving its purpose either on their own minds, or as an appointed means of having our need supplied according to God's glorious riches? If family prayers are hindered, what hope of family prosperity, in the best sense of the words? and if conjugal duty is neglected, how can they but be hindered? They are in danger of being neglected, or dis-

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 16. [2] See note A.

turbed, or discontinued. Let, then, christian husbands, and wives too, guard against everything which may hinder family prayer. Let their whole conduct toward each other look back and forward to the family altar. Let it be consistent with devotion, preparatory to it, indicative of its influence. Avoid whatever makes an introduction into the Divine presence less easy or less delightful. Keep open a passage wide enough to advance together to the throne of grace; go hand in hand. Agree touching the things which ye shall ask, and it shall be done for you of your Father in heaven.[1]

The passage before us is merely a particular application of a great general principle: the connection between holy conduct and devotional exercises. They act and react on one another. The more conscientiously we perform our various duties, the more shall we be disposed for, the more enjoyment shall we find, and the more advantages shall we derive from, our devotional exercises; and the more we engage in devotional exercises in a right spirit, the more shall we be inclined and enabled, "in all holy conversation and godliness," to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Calling on the name of the Lord, and departing from iniquity, are closely conjoined. To secure frequency, constancy, comfort in prayer, we must live holily; and, to secure our living holily, we must be "constant in prayer:" "praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

Thus have I finished my illustrations of the apostle's exposition and enforcement of conjugal duties. I conclude in the words of an honored elder brother (Mr. Jay), whom I have more than once referred to in this discourse, and whose works generally I most cordially recommend as a family book: "Let all who stand in the marriage relation be willing to know and practise the duties which spring from it. Enter, my brethren and sisters, the temple of revelation, and bow before the Divine oracle. Say, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Extract from the Scripture the mind of God concerning yourselves individually. Take home the words I have been explaining. Do not, ye husbands, take away the duties of the wife, nor, ye wives, the duties of the husband, but both of you respectively your own, and say,—'O that my feet were directed to keep thy statutes: I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me: through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way: I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.'"[2]

NOTE A. p. 388.

It is quite possible that the apostle may have a reference to a practice exemplified and recommended by the good PHILIP HENRY. "Besides this" (secret prayer) "he and his wife constantly prayed together morning and evening: and never, if they were together at home or abroad, was it intermitted; and, from his own experience of the benefit of this practice, he would take all opportunities to recommend it to those in that relation, as conducing very much to the comfort of it, and to their furtherance in that, which he

[1] Jay.

[2] See note B.

would often say is the great duty of yoke-fellows; and that is 'to do all they can to help one another to heaven.' He would say, that this duty of husbands and wives praying together is intimated in that of the apostle, 1 Pet. iii. 7, where they are exhorted to 'live as heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers' (especially their prayers together) 'be not hindered;' that nothing may be done to hinder them *from* praying together, nor to hinder them *in* it, nor to spoil the success of their prayers. This sanctifies the relation, and fetcheth in a blessing upon it, makes the comforts of it the more sweet, and the cares and crosses of it the more easy, and is an excellent means of preserving and increasing love in the relation. Many to whom he had recommended the practice of this duty have blessed God for him, and for his advice concerning it."—*An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Philip Henry, by his Son*, p. 58. Lond. 1712.

Note B. p. 389.

"Let such married persons as God hath blessed in this kind" (by their being "equally yoked," in the best sense), "learn what cause they have to be thankful to God, either for other. Let the jars and discord that they see between other men and women mismatched, and the cross and cursed carriage of them either toward other, together with the manifold annoyances and grievous mischiefs and inconveniences that ensue ordinarily thereupon, be a means to put them in mind of God's great mercy and goodness toward them, and to make them more thankful to him for the same. And, since they have received either other from God, let them herein show their thankfulness unto God, by endeavoring to bring either other nearer unto God, by helping either other forward in the good ways of God. Do either with other as Anna did with her son Samuel—as she had him of God, so she bestowed him on God again: return each other again to God, and labor to return them better than they received them. The better they shall make either other, and the nearer they shall bring either other to God, the more good through God's goodness, shall they have either of other. The more man and wife profit in the fear of God, the more comfortably and contentedly shall they live together, the better shall it be for them both."—Gataker. '*A wife indeed.*'

This most learned man's sermons, entitled—"Marriage Prayer," "A Good Wife, God's Gift," "A Wife Indeed," and "Marriage Duties," are full of important practical instruction, quaintly but often very impressively stated. Take a specimen or two. "As it were a thing prodigious and monstrous in nature for a rib in the body to stand either equal with or above the head; so we may well say, that a man-kind woman, or a masterly wife is even a monster in nature. Γυνὴ δὲ νικῶσ' ἄνδρα κακόν ἐστι μέγα." "A masterly wife is as much despised and derided for taking rule over her husband, as he for yielding to it; and that not only among those that be godly and religious, but even among those that be but natural men and women." "A christian married man is bound to believe and persuade himself, not that his wife is the wisest or the fairest, or the best conditioned woman in the world; but that she is the fittest wife for him, that God hath allotted her to him, and therefore [he is bound] to rest himself contented in her, and satisfied with her, and live with her with as much alacrity and cheerfulness as may be. And as parents delight in their children not because they are fair, or wise, or witty, but because they are their children; and, therefore, however seeing better parts in others, they could be content to change quality for quality, yet they will not exchange child for child; so a man is to love and delight in his wife, even for this cause that she is his wife, and howsoever it may be, he could wish some of her parts bettered, yet to rejoice in her as they are." "Faith, and the fear of God, and godliness are to be exercised, as well in the special duties of our several callings, as in the general duties of Christianity; and so run through our whole life, as the woof through the web; and so among other through all the offices of the married state."

Jeremy Taylor's "Marriage Ring," in his ΕΝΙΑΥΤΟΣ, is also well worth perusing. What can be more beautiful than his eulogy on marriage. "Marriage was ordained by God, instituted in paradise; the relief of a natural necessity, and the first blessing from the Lord. Marriage is a school and exercise of virtue. Here is the proper scene of piety and patience, of the duty of parents and the charity of relatives; here kindness is spread abroad, and love is united and made firm as a centre. Marriage is the nursery of heaven, fills up the numbers of the elect, and hath in it the labors of love and the delicacies of friendship, the blessing of society, and the union of hands and hearts. Marriage is the mother of the world, and preserves kingdoms and fills cities, and churches, and heaven itself. Like the useful bee, marriage builds a house and gathers sweetness from every flower, and labors, and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and feeds the world with delicacies, and obeys their king and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good things to which God hath designed the present constitution of the world."

DISCOURSE XV.

DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR CIVIL AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS.

1 Pet. iii. 8-17.—Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear; having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing.

"Let not your good be evil spoken of," says the Apostle Paul to the Christians of Rome; and the injunction is equally applicable to, equally obligatory on, Christians of all countries and ages.

The religion of Christians is emphatically their "good thing," their most precious treasure, their most valuable possession. Christianity, viewed not merely as exhibiting a perfect system of religious and moral truth, and prescribing a complete course of religious and moral discipline, but considered also as "the ministration of the Spirit," of truth, and purity, and happiness, to ignorant, deluded, depraved, miserable men; the appointed and the only medium through which God, the Author of all good, will bestow on mankind forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life; "the power of God unto salvation"—is plainly, inexpressibly, inestimably, excellent and valuable. "It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of pure gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for its price is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold."

To him who cordially embraces it, it is an abundant, perennial fountain of the most precious blessings. It is in him "a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life;" it gives peace to his conscience, and purity to his heart; it guides him in perplexity, sustains him in weakness, defends him in danger, and comforts him in sorrow; it quells his fears and animates his hopes; it stimulates his indolence and directs his activity; it sweetens the cup of death and brightens the prospect of eternity. And even with regard to those

who neglect or oppose it, when brought within the sphere of its indirect influence, though by increasing their responsibilities it increases their hazards, it yet materially adds both to the number and security of their comforts. How much happier is the state of society in Britain than in any heathen country, and how much of this favorable difference is to be traced to Christianity! How much do those who neglect, those who would destroy Christianity, owe to it!

It is strange that so good a thing should be evil spoken of. Of it, as of its Author, it may well be asked, "Why, what evil has it done?" Yet so it is; in all countries and ages this incomparably good thing has been evil spoken of. Its doctrines have been misstated, and its tendencies misrepresented. Its Divine origin has been called in question and denied; and its effects both on the character and happiness of mankind, both in their individual and social capacities, have been represented as in a high degree injurious. In no case have names been more misapplied and things confounded than here. Sweet has been termed bitter; light, darkness; and good, evil.

To expect to render unadulterated Christianity, all excellent as it is, admired by, or even palatable to, a world sunk in ignorance and sin, "lying under the wicked one," without a radical revolution in their sentiments and habits, is a most unreasonable anticipation. Men will prefer darkness to light while their deeds are evil. But though it be impossible, while worldly and wicked men and the religion of Christ continue what they are, to extinguish malignant feeling and silence reproachful speeches in reference to the gospel; yet it is most true that the sphere of these calumnies would be considerably narrowed, the plausibility of these misrepresentations greatly lessened, and of consequence their probable mischievous effect much diminished, were it not for the improprieties and imprudences of the professed, and even of the real friends of Christianity. The behavior of false disciples has frequently drawn, not only much deserved reproach on themselves, but also much unmerited odium on the cause for which they had no true regard; and, what is still more to be deplored, the temper and conduct of those to whom that cause was really dear, have been too often such as to make their good evil spoken of.

Nor will this fact, however much to be lamented, appear difficult to be accounted for by any one who is acquainted with the very imperfect state of even regenerated human nature in this world. Through inadvertency, want of experience, error in judgment, unexpected temptation, and other evils inseparable from our present condition, persons whose prevailing chief desire is, "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," are in constant hazard, by something in their sentiments or dispositions, or language or conduct, of giving strength to the prejudices of worldly men against Christianity, and plausibility to the false and calumnious misrepresentations to which those prejudices give origin. To guard against this evil seems the great object of the apostle Peter, in that section of his epistle, part of which forms the subject of the present discourse.

That section commences with the 12th verse of the second chapter, and terminates with the 17th verse of the third. Its theme is,

"Have your conversation honest," that is, honorable "among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation;" in other words, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "Let not your good be evil spoken of." In the peculiarities of the faith and experience of the Christian, in the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and in the inner life of him who believes it, there is much, when brought strongly out, to excite the astonishment and even the disgust of an ungodly world; and though, to prevent this, the Christian must neither conceal the one, nor disavow the other, nor be ashamed of either, yet, if he would avoid the evil of bringing reproach on his religion, and gain the good of constraining even enemies to feel its power and acknowledge its excellence, he must endeavor to make stand out in strong relief those parts of the christian system and character, of which even an unregenerate man is, to a considerable extent, a judge; and which, approving themselves to his understanding and conscience and affections, are fitted to allay his prejudices against the system of which they form an essential part.

In accordance with this principle, the apostle, in order to the gaining of the end in view, exhorts Christians to a scrupulously exact discharge of the duties which rise out of the relations of civil and domestic society, especially in cases where the persons with whom they were connected in these relations were not Christians. He calls upon them, as members of civil society, to yield a cheerful obedience to the commands, and a ready submission to the arrangements, of the constituted authorities, whether supreme or subordinate, so far as compliance with these would not compromise their allegiance to the absolutely Supreme Ruler: "Submit to every institution of man for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well;" and, while showing a peculiar regard to the christian society of which they were members, to manifest a proper respect for every human being, whatever might be his religious opinions or his place in civil society, thus, "honoring all men." He calls on christian servants, who were generally slaves, to be subject to their own masters, who were generally heathens; and warns them against allowing the unreasonableness and severity of the treatment which they might receive so to influence their minds, as to induce them to neglect their duties, or to be negligent in performing them. He calls on christian wives to be subject to their own husbands, even when unconverted men; and he calls on christian husbands to be equally conscientious in the discharge of their duties to their wives. He then "finally," in the passage of which the text is a part, thus closing this series of exhortations, lays before them a variety of injunctions of a more general nature, obligatory, not on particular classes, but on the whole body of Christians.

These injunctions naturally range themselves under three heads, as they refer to the temper and conduct which Christians should cherish and exemplify, towards each other, towards mankind at large, and towards their persecutors, or those who treated them injuriously on account of their religion. Within the limits of the christian society they were to be distinguished by a community of views and feelings,

the characteristic views and feelings of the society, and by cherishing and displaying brotherly love. "Be of the same mind; have compassion one of another:" or rather, have the same feelings; be united in heart as well as in mind; "love as brethren." Within and without these limits, they were to manifest "pitifulness," that is mercifulness, kind-heartedness; and "courtesy" that is affability and kindliness; or, according to another reading very generally adopted, modesty, humility, "be pitiful, be courteous." And, with regard to those who persecuted and despitefully used them, they were not to resent such treatment, but to meet it by a display of the directly opposite sentiments; they were to guard against an undue fear of their persecutors by cultivating the supreme fear due to God; and they were always to be ready to give an account of their faith and hope, and of the grounds on which these rested, to those who called them in question for them, maintaining at once "a good conscience," and "a good conversation." Some of these injunctions are given without any motive being urged but the general one, that this was necessary in order to have their conversation honest among the Gentiles; while others, especially those belonging to the last class, are enforced by a variety of appropriate considerations.

It is always desirable to look at a passage of scripture not only in itself, but in its connection. When we act otherwise, we not only are all but sure to lose much of its beauty and force, but in many cases we are in danger of entirely misapprehending its reference and mistaking its meaning. When, as in the case before us, we can distinctly see to what particular class of persons injunctions are addressed, and what is the object in addressing such injunctions to such a class, we can the more readily discover the practical improvement we ought to make of them, and are the more likely to find that particular portion of "scripture given by inspiration of God, profitable to us for doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness," that as christian men we may be made "perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work."

I.—DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TO EACH OTHER.

Let us then, in the first place, turn our attention to those injunctions which refer to the temper Christians should cherish, and the conduct they should pursue, in reference to each other. These injunctions are three—"Be all of one mind; having (or have) compassion one of another; love as brethren." Strictly speaking, all the terms here employed are descriptive of internal habits and dispositions; but these terms are here, like similar terms both in the scriptures and common language, used to signify not only the inward sentiment but the outward expression of it. When we say "be kind," we mean not merely 'cherish benevolent feelings, be kindly affectioned,' but 'manifest this by friendly behavior, by using the language and performing the offices of kindness.' So when the apostle says, "Be of one mind; be united in your affections; love as brethren," he means, 'Be and appear to be united in your views and feelings; cherish and manifest brotherly love toward each other.'

The external manifestations of unity and love, apart from the internal principle, do not fulfil the apostle's injunction. They are worse than valueless; they are criminal. They are a beautiful body dead, or, if animated, animated by the demon of deceit. But, on the other hand, these principles, excellent as they are, unless embodied in suitable actions and habits, would not at all serve the purpose which the apostle has in view, the making an impression favorable to Christianity and to Christians, on the minds even of unconverted men.

§ 1.—*To cultivate and manifest union of sentiment.*

Keeping this general remark in view, let us proceed to the consideration of the first of these injunctions, "Be ye all of one mind."[1] We have the same, or a very similar, injunction repeatedly given by the apostle Paul—"Be of one mind," says he to the Roman Churches, "one towards another;" "Be like-minded towards one another, according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." To the Corinthians he says, "Brethren, I beseech you that ye be perfectly joined in the same mind and in the same judgment:" "Brethren, be of one mind;" and to the Philippians, "Be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind: stand fast in one spirit, with one mind."[2] An injunction so frequently repeated, so warmly urged, by men who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, must be important. Let us endeavor distinctly to apprehend its meaning; for if we do not distinctly understand it, we are not likely accurately to obey it.

The term "mind" is frequently, perhaps usually, employed in Scripture to signify the whole inner man, including both the intellect and the affections; what we call figuratively both the head and the heart. To "have the mind of Christ in us," is to think and feel as Christ did, to have the same views of truth as he had, and to be similarly affected by these views. To "mind the things of the flesh," is to make present sensible things, "things seen and temporal," the great subjects of our thoughts, and the great objects of our affections. "To mind the things of the spirit," is to make the realities of the invisible and future world, "the things unseen and eternal," for our knowledge of which we are entirely indebted to the Spirit, the great subjects of our thoughts, and the great objects of our affections.[3]

When, however, the term is used along with, and, as it were, in contradistinction to, some other term descriptive of affection and feeling, it is to be viewed as denoting sentiment or opinion. This is the case here. The union of feeling, the common affections, by which Christians should be characterized, are enjoined in the second clause of the verse, which may be justly rendered "have the same feelings."[4]

[1] Πάντες ὁμόφρονες.

[2] Rom. xii. 16; xv. 5, 6. 1 Cor. i. 10. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Phil. i. 27; ii. 2.

[3] Phil. ii. 3. Rom. viii. 5.

[4] Συμπαθεῖς, similiter affecti. This is one of the ἅπαξ λεγόμενα. The cognate verb occurs Heb. iv. 15; x. 34. Raphelius furnishes a fine illustration of the meaning of the word, in a passage from Polybius:—"Certainly, if Scipio was peculiarly fitted by nature for anything, it was for this, that he should inspire confidence in the minds of men." Καὶ συμπαθεῖς ποιῆσαι τοὺς παρακαλουμένους, 'and transfuse his own feelings into those whom he addressed.' —Raph. Obs. Vol. ii. p. 760.

We, therefore, consider the injunction before us as equivalent to 'have, and show that you have, the same sentiments.'

"Be of one mind" does not mean—'Have the same sentiments on all subjects,' or even, 'have the same sentiments on all subjects connected with religion.' Compliance with such an injunction is impossible, so long as the measure of mental faculty and the means of information are different in some degree or other in every individual. If a man honestly exercise his mind on the subject brought before it, that is, if he really have a mind of his own, that mind will be in some respects different from every other man's mind.

But it does mean—'Be united, be entirely united in those views, both doctrinal and practical, the possession of which is essential to the very being of genuine Christianity.' There are such principles; and, notwithstanding all the ingenious and perplexing discussions which have taken place respecting fundamental and non-fundamental principles in religion, there is little practical difficulty in determining what are the views in which Christians must be united in mind and judgment.

With regard to doctrines, they are such as the following: "As to man's natural estate, that it is one of guilt, and depravity, and helplessness: As to God's character and government, that He is most holy and benignant, and that it is most wise and righteous; that "He is the rock, his work is perfect, all his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he;" "His law is holy, just, and good:" [1] As to Jesus Christ, that he is the divinely appointed, the divinely qualified, the divinely accredited, the Divine Saviour from guilt and depravity, and misery; that "his blood cleanseth from all sin;" that "he is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by him;" that he never casts out any who come to him; that he was "given for our offences, and raised again for our justification;" that "he is Lord and Judge of all;" that he is the one Master of all his disciples, the only Lord of their consciences: [2] As to the Holy Spirit, that he is the Divine Author of all that is spiritually right and good in the views and affections and conduct of mankind, and that in his enlivening, and enlightening, and sanctifying, and consoling influence, he is shed forth abundantly on all who believe on Christ Jesus, as the earnest of their inheritance, as the seal of God on them till the day of final and complete redemption. These are a specimen of the kind of doctrinal principles referred to by the apostle.[3]

As to practical principles, in which Christians must be all of one mind, they are such as the following: that "we ought to obey God rather than man;" that "things unseen and eternal" are to be preferred to "things seen and temporal;" that we must "deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Christ," wherever he leads us; that the greatest suffering is to be chosen before the least sin; that we must become as little children, in order to enter into the kingdom of God; that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" that we should "live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and who rose

[1] Deut. xxxii. 4. Rom. vii. 12.
[2] 1 John i. 7. Heb. vii. 25. John vi. 37. Rom. iv. 25. Acts x. 36.
[3] Eph. i. 13, 14.

again."[1] With regard to these principles, and such principles as these, Christians must be of one mind. He who is otherwise minded, he who is oppositely minded, is not, and cannot be, a Christian.

The unity of mind which the apostle requires on such subjects, can be secured only in one way. The desired and desirable oneness of mind is neither to be obtained by the great mass of christian men, of moderate intellectual faculties and attainments, implicitly submitting to the decisions of a few master minds; nor by individual Christians making mutual compromises of sentiment; it is to be obtained by all Christians seeking to have in them the mind of their master, Christ.[2] The union of mind they are to seek is union in the truth, in "the truth as it is in Jesus." The mind of Christ is in his word. His Spirit is promised to enable us to understand his word. The man who studies that word in a dependence on that Spirit, will be made to know and believe the truth which it contains, so far as this is necessary to salvation, and, in the degree in which he does so, Christ's mind will become his mind. All who follow this course will, in proportion to the simplicity, and ardor, and perseverance with which they prosecute it, be successful; and in being conformed to the mind of Christ, they will come all to have one mind in reference to each other. And so indeed it is, and always has been, and ever will be. All true Christians, amid all their differences of opinion, are of one mind in reference to the great doctrinal and practical principles of their holy faith, the principles which pacify the conscience, and purify the heart, and guide the conduct; the principles by which they live, in which they find the life of their souls, the spring of their spiritual activity, the source of their spiritual comfort.

As to the points on which they differ, so far as they act in character, it will be found, that it is their union of mind on the one great principle, that "One is our Master even Christ,"[3] which leads to a difference of mind respecting those points—uniformly of minor importance. Those Christians who differed in their judgments as to the propriety of observing certain days, were of one mind as to the duty of Christians to yield implicit obedience to the seen will of their common Lord. "He that observed the day observed it to the Lord, and he who did not observe the day, to the Lord he did not observe it:"[4] and giving each other credit for acting with a good conscience, "as to the Lord," they felt more united by their common mind that the Lord was to be obeyed, than divided by the diversity of their opinions, as to what, in such a case, was obedience to him.

With regard to the great principles above referred to, the apostolic rule is, "let us who are perfect, be *thus* minded;" "of one mind," "perfectly joined in the same judgment:" having attained to this, "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."[5] And with regard to the minor points referred to, the rule is, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," and "let no man judge his brother in such matters;"[6] and this is our comfort, that if we walk together,

[1] Acts v. 29. Matt. xvi. 24; xxviii. 3. Acts xx. 35. 2 Cor. v. 15.

[2] The apostle Paul exhorts the Philippians (ii. 2) τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν—εἶναι σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἓν φρονοῦντες; and (ver. 5) he shows them how to secure this, τοῦτο γὰρ φρονείσθω ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

[3] Matt. xxiii. 8. [4] Rom. xiv. 6. [5] Phil. iii. 15. [6] Rom. xiv. 5, 10, 15.

in the great things in which we are of one mind, we are likely ere long, to become of one mind, too, with regard even to the minor points on which we do not agree; "for," says the apostle, "if in any thing, we" who are of one mind in Christ, "be differently minded from each other, God shall reveal even that to us."[1]

It should be the constant care of those who are called on to watch over the communion of the christian church, that none be admitted into it but those who appear to be of one mind, even "the mind of Christ," on the essentials of christian doctrine and practice, and that none be continued members of that church, who give evidence that, on these points, they are differently minded from him. Yet great care must be taken not to insist on a greater extent of union of mind than the Master has insisted on. It has been no uncommon thing for men, even good men, in insisting that all applying for admission, should be entirely of one mind with them, on points on which the will of the Lord is revealed with comparative obscureness, or it may be, not revealed at all, to exclude men who were obviously of the same mind with their Lord; and to admit men who, though they professed, and it may be truly, that they were of the same mind with *them*, as to their sectarian peculiarities, made it very evident that they were not of the same mind with *Him* with regard to those saving principles which transform the character. Few things have done greater harm to the Church than this attempt to make the mind of a man, or body of men, rather than the mind which was in Christ, the test of that *one mind* which is the true term of christian communion.

This is just a peculiar form of the pride and selfishness which are natural to all men, and are not extinguished even in good men. It is the wish to have men of my way of thinking, or of the way of thinking of my denomination, instead of the wish to have both them and myself of the one mind which God gives us when he, by his Spirit, puts his laws, the revelation he has made of his mind and will, in the heart, and writes it on the inward parts. It has been beautifully said, "there is naturally, in every man's mind, and, most in the shallowest, a kind of fancied infallibility in themselves, which makes them as earnest about agreement in the smallest punctilio, as in the highest article of faith. Stronger spirits are usually more patient of contradiction, and less violent, especially in doubtful things; and that they that see farthest, are least peremptory in their determinations. The apostle, to Timothy, speaks of 'the spirit of a sound mind.' It is a good sound constitution of mind not to feel every blast, either of seeming reason, to be taken with it; or of cross opinion, to be offended at it."[2]

This oneness of mind which Christians are to seek in a common conformity of their minds to the mind which is in Christ, should be manifested in their common profession, defence, and practice of the truth which they all know and believe. They are together to "hold fast," and together to "hold forth," the word of life; to "strive together for the faith of the gospel;" to walk together, "in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless." When, instead of this, professed Christians strive and dispute among themselves;

[1] Phil. iii. 15. [2] Leighton.

when, instead of appearing to be "perfectly joined in the same mind, and in the same judgment," they are "divisions and contentions;" when, instead of "with one mind and one mouth glorifying God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," they, in effect, excommunicate one another, and treat each other as heathen men and publicans; the conversation of Christians is not "honest among the Gentiles." Great discredit has thus been cast on the cause of Christ: great obstacles have been thrown in the way of the conversion of unbelievers, and the name of God and his Son have been blasphemed. Woe, woe, has been to the world because of these stumbling-blocks. The controversies among Christians have far more effectually impeded the progress of the gospel than the controversies against Christianity.

When Christians shall more consistently manifest the christian mind, which already exists in all who deserve the name, in the united exhibition of the truth in their profession and conduct, the word of the Lord will have free course; "it will run, and be" more illustriously "glorified." It will "grow and be multiplied."[1] It was so in the beginning of the gospel. When "the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul," and "continued with one accord, steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," they had "favor with all the people;" "the people magnified them;" "multitudes were added to the church, both of men and women;" "there were daily added to the church such as should be saved;" "the word of God increased, the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."[2] If Christians had taken but half the pains to show the world how completely they are united in mind and judgment on the great points, that they have taken to make it acquainted with the minute and sometimes impalpable differences which exist among them (the former is fitted to do themselves and their Master honor, and the world good; the latter casts discredit not only on themselves but on the cause they support; and throws stumbling-blocks in the world's way); and had they exhibited more of the noble, liberal character, which the contemplation of the great points of union is fitted to form, than of the contracted selfish temper which those controversies about minor points engender and nourish, how much higher would both Christianity and Christians have stood in the estimation of mankind at large; and how much nearer would the christian church have been to the full possession of her goodly heritage, the peopled earth! Could we indulge, to borrow Robert Hall's language, the hope "that such a state of things was likely soon to establish itself, we should hail the dawn of a brighter day, and consider it as a nearer approach to the ultimate triumph of the Church, than the annals of time have yet recorded. In the accomplishment of our Lord's prayer, that all his people may be one, men would behold a demonstration of the divinity of his mission, which the most impious could not resist; and behold, in the Church, a peaceful haven, inviting them to retire from the tossings and perils of this unquiet ocean, to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world were not permitted to invade."[3]

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 1. Acts xii. 24.
[2] Acts iv. 32, 33; ii. 42, 47; vi. 7.
[3] On Terms of Communion.—Works, ii. 168.

§ 2.—*To cultivate and manifest union of feeling.*

The second injunction of the apostle, bearing on this temper and conduct of Christians among themselves, as given by our translators is, "have compassion one of another." This version is justly considered by interpreters, generally, as very unduly limiting the meaning of the apostolic injunction. It confines it to sympathy with fellow-Christians, under suffering; whereas the word, even supposing our translation to be substantially right in the meaning given to it, refers to fellow-feeling generally, and includes rejoicing with christian brethren, when they rejoice, as well as weeping with them when they weep. It is plain, however, that this sympathizing temper is one variety, a particular aspect of the disposition enjoined in the next clause, "love as brethren;" and though this fact would not be a good reason for giving the word before us an unauthorized, or even a very uncommon signification, yet, if the proper and common meaning of the word brings out a sense different from that of the succeeding clause, a sense, true and important in itself, and peculiarly suitable to the connection in which it stands, there can be no doubt, that that sense ought to be preferred.

Now this, we apprehend, is a correct statement of the case. The words literally signify, "have common feelings." They are the counterpart of the first clause; that says, 'be of one mind,' this 'be of one heart;' that says, 'think alike,' this 'feel alike;' that says, 'hold the same truth,' this 'cherish the same dispositions.' Be all animated by the same affections. To unfold the sentiment a little: 'Cherish every one of you the same reverence and trust in God; the same sense of insignificance as creatures, of demerit as sinners, of obligation as saved sinners; the same love and gratitude to the Saviour; the same dependence on, and fear of grieving, the Holy Spirit; the same hatred of sin and love of holiness; the same holy contempt of the present evil world; the same moderation in prosperity, and patience in adversity; the same zeal for the divine glory; the same brotherly-kindness; the same charity. Let not merely the articles of your faith be the same, but also the features of your character.'

This injunction is very closely connected with that which precedes it. This can be complied with only by those who have obeyed that. We must have the one mind, in order to our having the one heart; and if we really have the one mind, we certainly shall have the one heart. We are "transformed by the renewing of the mind." The doctrine delivered to us, to use the apostle's figure, is the mould in which the new creature is cast;[1] the various principles of the truth as it is in Jesus, being as it were the various parts of this mould, each intended and fitted to produce some portion of that image of God in the soul of man, of which the Holy Spirit is the wondrous Author. His influence, and the Divine word, are equally necessary in their own places, to the production of the desired effect. The word will not do it alone, for without his influence it will not be understood and believed; and whatever Divine influence might do, and he would be equally unwise and impious who should set limits to Omnipotence,

[1] Rom. xii. 2; vi. 17. Εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς.

we have no reason to expect that that influence will produce its effects in any other way than that which equally corresponds with the constitution of man, the work of God's hand, and the declarations of Scripture, the word of his mouth; through means of the truth understood and believed.

He, then, who would comply with the apostle's injunction, to have those common feelings, which ought to characterize all Christians, must study the Bible, in its meaning and evidence; he must "let the word of Christ," which contains his mind, "dwell in him richly;" [1] and he must at the same time yield up his mind to the influence of the Good Spirit, beseeching him to guide him into the truth, to open his understanding to understand the Scriptures, and to open his heart to receive the love of the truth, that he may be saved, by being sanctified by it.

This common mode of feeling ought to be, and, indeed, where it exists, must be, manifested in a corresponding conduct. And when a Christian does habitually exhibit the feelings, disposition, and temper which the truth believed naturally produces, the effect is, "a conversation honest, honorable among the Gentiles." When the piety, and humility, and self-denial, and brotherly-kindness, and patience, and public spirit of the Gospel are displayed, the men of the world have not only no evil thing to say, but are involuntarily impressed with a reverence both for the man and for his principles. The Christian who acts thus, will make it impossible that any man who narrowly observes him, should despise either him or his religion; while, on the other hand, the want of a manifestation of such feelings as a christian profession gives the world a right to expect in an individual, and still more, the manifestation of an opposite kind of feeling, excites suspicion both with regard to the man and his principles, leading to the conclusion, either that he is a hypocrite, or, if he be not, that the system that he professes, must either be a bad one, as making him a bad man, or at any rate, a powerless one, as not having been able to make him a good man.

§ 3.—*To cultivate and manifest brotherly-kindness.*

The third injunction of the apostle, referring to the temper which Christians should cherish, and the conduct they should pursue, towards each other is, "love as brethren." This injunction may be and has been rendered, 'be lovers of the brethren,' [2] that is, cherish and display the peculiar affection which Christians ought to bear to Christians. When illustrating the concluding paragraph of the first chapter of this epistle, I had an opportunity of explaining, at considerable length, the foundation, the nature, and the appropriate manifestations of this principle.[3]

The order of the apostle's injunctions here, deserves well to be noted: "Be of one mind, be of one heart." Hold and profess the same principles, cherish and manifest the same feelings; in other words, be brethren in Christ, be spiritual brethren; and, then, love the brethren; "love as brethren." The foundation of the peculiar love which

[1] Col. iii. 16. [2] Φιλάδελφοι, *i. e.* ἔστε. [3] Discourse vi.

Christians should cherish to Christians, lies in their common faith and experience as Christians. They love one another, "in the truth, for the truth's sake, which is in them." Just in the degree that I am a true Christian, do I become capable of loving those who are true Christians; and just in the degree in which they are true Christians, are they, can they be, the objects of my christian affection.

The idea suggested by the words, as rendered by our translators, is slightly different, yet well worthy of illustration: "Love as brethren," that is, either love one another, seeing ye are brethren, or let your love correspond to the intimacy and permanency of the relation in which ye stand to one another; love, as brothers love each other. The first idea I illustrated fully in the discourse already referred to. I shall now attempt briefly to unfold the second. Let your love to your fellow-Christians resemble the love which one brother bears, or ought to bear, to another. True christian love resembles the love of brothers in various respects, to a few of which I shall shortly advert.

They may both be considered as partaking very much of the nature of instincts. It is a part of my constitution as a man to love my brother. Not to love a brother is felt to be something unnatural as well as improper, monstrous as well as wrong. It is a part of my constitution as a new creature to love all my spiritual brethren. If I love my Father, how can I but love his children? He who makes me a member of the family, in so doing, gives me the feelings of a child and a brother. Christians are "thus taught of God," [1] not only in the word, but as it were in the instincts of their new nature, to love one another. "As touching brotherly love," says the Apostle Paul, "ye need not that I write unto you; for even ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

The affection of a brother to a brother is sincere and disinterested. When first developed, the habit of duplicity is unknown; and the child, in loving his brother, thinks of nothing less than mercenary advantage. He loves him just because he is his brother. The love of Christians to Christians should be "without dissimulation;" "unfeigned;" "love out of a pure heart." [2]

The affection of a brother to a brother is warm and tender. When David would express the peculiar ardor of his attachment to Jonathan, he calls him brother: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan;" [3] and it is proverbial to say of one friend strongly attached to another, he loves him as if he were his brother. The affection which Christians should bear to Christians should be a strong affection, capable of producing much forbearance, much exertion, much sacrifice, much suffering; a love which many waters cannot quench, which the floods cannot drown.

The love of brothers is forbearing and forgiving. A brother will forbear with and forgive in a brother what he would consider as insufferable and unpardonable in a stranger; and a dutiful, affectionate brother, when differences do arise in the family, throws a veil over them, seeks to keep them within the sacred domestic circle; and even when dissatisfied with a brother, does not think of proclaiming his brother's injustice, and faults, and his own injuries, to a stranger.

[1] Θεοδίδακτοι, 1 Thess. iv. 9. [2] 1 Tim. i. 5. [3] 2 Sam. i. 26.

And thus, too, Christians, "with all loveliness and meekness," are to "forbear one another in love," "putting away from them all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, with all malice, and being kind one to another, tender-hearted, forbearing one another in love, and forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel against any, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them," forgiving "not only seven times, but seventy times seven." [1]

The love of a brother to a brother is active. It is chiefly manifested in habitual kindliness of behavior, and in doing its object good as opportunity occurs. It is love "not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." And so it ought to be with the Christian. If a brother or sister is naked, and destitute of daily food, the christian brother must not content himself with saying, Depart in peace, may you be warmed and filled; he must give him the things which are necessary for the body. If he have this world's goods, and see his brother in need, he must not shut up his bowels of compassion against him. If he do, it is a proof that neither the love of God nor of the brethren dwells in him.[2]

Few things have a greater tendency to recommend Christianity to worldly unbelieving men than the habitual exemplification of this precept; and, on the other hand, few things have done more to injure that religion, and to prevent its progress, than the angry debates, the unseemly animosities, the virulent quarrels, which have so often taken place among its professors. These "cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of," and "give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." Proceedings of this kind should lead to great searchings of heart among those who indulge in them: for surely there is reason to fear that they are not really, but only nominally, among the disciples of HIM, who says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another;" and were their ears but open to discipline, they could scarcely help hearing *Him* indignantly saying to them, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say to you?" "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "But if ye bite and devour one another," if ye hate and revile one another, who are ye? "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling him; but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever loveth not his brother is not of God. He who loveth his brother, hath passed from death to life. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" [3]

Such is a short illustration of those general injunctions contained in the text that refer to the temper which Christians should cherish, and the conduct they should exemplify, in reference to one another.

[1] Eph. iv. 31, 32. Matt. xviii. 22. [2] James ii. 15, 16. 1 John iii. 17.
[3] John xiii. 34, 35. Luke vi. 46. John xv. 14. 1 John ii. 9–11; iii. 10, 14; iv. 20.

They are to hold and profess the same principles; they are to cherish and manifest the same feelings; and they are to cultivate and display that love to one another which naturally grows out of this community of sentiment and feeling, loving the brethren, because they are brethren, cherishing and manifesting towards them an affection which, in its spontaneousness, and warmth, and steadiness, and active influence, resembles the affection of brother to brother; and they are to do all this, that their conversation may be "honest among the Gentiles," and that thus they may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. I conclude this part of the discourse with the prayer, that the Good Spirit would write these golden maxims on our hearts, and enable us to exhibit a fair copy of his writing on these fleshly tablets, in our habitual temper and behavior: "Be of one mind: be of one heart: love as brethren." And "now may the God of patience and consolation grant us to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, that we may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there be no division among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment;"[1] so that the unbelieving world, beholding the effects of our union of mind and heart, in our common hearty efforts in the cause of our common Lord, and in bearing one another's infirmities, and relieving one another's wants, may be constrained to say, as of old, "Behold how these Christians love one another;" and that we ourselves, feeling the holy delights of such union and communion, may sing in our hearts, making melody to the Lord: "Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is as the dew of Hermon, the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore."

II.—DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TO MANKIND GENERALLY.

Let us now consider those injunctions respecting disposition and conduct, which refer, not only to the christian brotherhood, but to all mankind. "Be pitiful, be courteous." Let us attend to these two injunctions in their order.

§ 1.—*To "be pitiful."*

The first injunction is, "Be pitiful." The command contained in these words are substantially the same as that of our Lord: "Be ye merciful, as your Father in Heaven is merciful; and those of his holy Apostle Paul, "Be kindly affectioned; be kind, tender-hearted; put on bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, long-suffering."[2]

Mercy, properly speaking, is kindness to the miserable, benignity as manifested towards the suffering. To be merciful or pitiful is to cherish and manifest kind feeling towards those who are in distress. The mercy or pitifulness, which is the subject of injunction, is something very different from a naturally kind temper. That is a mere

[1] Rom. xv. 5, 6. 1 Cor. i. 10. [2] Luke vi. 36. Rom. xii. 10. Eph. iv. 32.

instinctive feeling, and though amiable and useful, is no proper object of moral approbation. Some very bad men have a large portion of it; while some very good men, if not destitute of it altogether, are by no means distinguished for it. In its movements there is no reference to divine authority; and it is often, as we have just remarked, found in conjunction with principle and habits most decidedly condemned by the divine law.

The mercy here enjoined has no doubt its basis, as all emotions have, in that part of our physical-mental constitution, which we call the affections. Had we no affections, we could not be subjects of christian mercy. But christian mercy is the result of the truth as it is in Jesus, understood and believed, acting on that part of our constitution. It is the feeling, which in man, a being capable of affection, is naturally and necessarily developed when he believes that truth, and in the degree in which he believes it. It is the feeling which a man, who knows and believes that in the exercise of sovereign kindness on the part of God, he is, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, who, under the influence of divine pity, took and bore all his responsibilities to divine justice, delivered from evils infinite in their number, immense in their magnitude, eternal in their duration; evils to which he had rendered himself liable, by his unprovoked and innumerable violations of a law most holy, just, and good; it is the feeling which such a conscious debtor to divine mercy naturally cherishes towards men who are involved in suffering, especially in that worst species of suffering from which he, through divine goodness and pity, has obtained security. This is a feeling which can be awakened in the human heart only by the Divine Spirit, leading the individual to believe the great love wherewith God hath loved us, and which he has commended to us, in not sparing his Son for our sakes, and in sparing and blessing us for his sake. Till there is this faith, there cannot be this feeling; and where this feeling is not, the very soul of christian mercy is absent.

The essence of the disposition required, is kind feeling towards the miserable, and its natural manifestation is the use of the means in our power to prevent and relieve misery. It is the direct opposite, not merely of cruelty, but of insensibility; a compassionate tenderness of heart, which makes us weep with them who weep; or who, though they do not weep, being ignorant of, or insensible to, their wretchedness, have on that ground the greater cause to weep.

This christian pity has a wide range. It looks at man in both the constituent parts of his nature. It regards both the souls and the bodies of men. It is drawn out, both by their spiritual and their bodily miseries: by evils feared as well as felt: by evils not feared, but sure to be felt if not feared: by the evils of eternity as well as of time. It ought to be exercised to all men who are in misery, though connected with us by no tie but that of a common nature; and the limits of its practical manifestation are to be prescribed by our means of preventing and relieving misery, and a wise judgment as to how those means can be most effectually employed in gaining the end in view, the prevention, the relief, the extinction of suffering.

The regard which christian pity shows in reference to the miseries

of man, as being connected with God and destined to immortality, is one of the features by which it is chiefly distinguished from that instinctive kindness to which I have been adverting. The good-natured, generous man of the world, pities and relieves the temporal wants and miseries of his fellow-men; but he thinks not of their spiritual state, their everlasting prospects. He has a tender sympathy, he exerts a generous activity, in reference to disease and destitution, and such varieties of ignorance and vice, as produce misery and disorder to the individual and society; but he has no pity for a soul dead in sin, far from God, destitute of hope, doomed to destruction. Indeed, this could not reasonably be expected. How should he feel for others in reference to such objects, who has, in that respect, no feeling for himself? The foundation of such feelings is wanting in him, in a just, abiding conviction of the realities of the unseen and eternal world; though professing, as many such persons do, to hold the views Scripture presents on these subjects, there does appear a monstrous absurdity in being so exceedingly concerned about the alleviation or removal of the sufferings of a few short years, and altogether careless about the prevention of the intolerable miseries of eternity. Pitifulness which the apostle enjoins is not thus inconsistent. The Christian looks on mankind chiefly in their relation to God and eternity. In his estimation, he is poor who is not rich towards God; he is blind who is ignorant of the way of salvation; he is naked who is destitute of the robe of righteousness; he is diseased who is covered with the leprosy of sin. No loss appears to him worthy of being compared with the loss of the soul; no death deserving the name but the second death; no agonies like the pangs of remorse and the torments of hell.

In this respect, christian pitifulness resembles the divine mercy, in the faith of which it originates. The God, whose nature as well as name is love, pities all the miseries of man; but it is immortal man, the sinner, who is emphatically the object of divine mercy. He thought of us in our low estate of guilt, and condemnation, and depravity, for "his mercy endureth forever." It stretches onwards to eternity, and manifests its greatness in delivering from "the lowest hell." In like manner, the Christian should and will regard with peculiar pity his fellow-men, viewed as immortal beings; labouring under spiritual disease; in danger of eternal death.

It has been justly said, "the sins of men, and the danger of their everlasting ruin by them, will awaken a lively concern and grief in every christian mind," in every heart in which the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost has produced genuine love to man. "He has the truest and justest compassion for his neighbor, who cannot, without a tender sorrow, see him provoking the great God to jealousy, throwing away his immortal soul, living under the power of a fell mortal distemper, and laying up in store for a dreadful account, 'heaping up wrath for the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.' Whoever believes that religion is a reality must be more deeply, if not more sensibly, affected with such a melancholy sight, than with seeing the bodily wants or consuming diseases of men, or with hearing their most dismal groans and mourn-

ful complaints, occasioned by worldly loss or corporeal suffering; for he knows the soul is more valuable than the body, hell is worse than death, and time is shorter than eternity." In a world full of suffering, "the transgressor" is the fittest object of the deepest commiseration. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved;" "Rivers of water," the tears of pity for self-destroying man, as well as of regret for injury done to the holy character and law of God, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because the wicked keep not thy law."[1]

But while chiefly affected by the miseries of men, as sinners, by their ignorance, and error, and guilt, and obduracy, and depravity, in their endlessly varied forms, and by the fearful, unavoidable, remediless state of wretchedness, which awaits impenitent men in the future world, the pitifulness of the Christian is drawn forth by misery of every kind, by suffering in every form.

The Christian, when he acts like himself, is far from being insensible to those calamities and wants of man, which are limited to the present state. He cherishes a tender sympathy with "all the evils to which men are exposed in their bodies, in their minds, in their connection with each other, in their external circumstances, from whatever cause they may originate, whether from the immediate visitation of God, from the injustice and cruelty of their fellow-men, or from their own folly and crime."[2] He pities suffering in every form. Wherever he sees misery, he feels compassion. Like Job, he "weeps for all who are in trouble, and his soul is grieved for the poor."

But the apostolic injunction looks to appropriate manifestation of the feeling, as well as to its existence. When he says, "be pitiful," he means, show by your conduct that you are pitiful. Christian pity is essentially an operative principle. It is not "a well shut up, a fountain sealed;" it is a copious source of streams of blessing.

Pity for the spiritual miseries of men must be manifested in appropriate, wise, vigorous, persevering endeavors for relief. We must not stand by the self-erected pile on which the sinner is about to offer himself in sacrifice to the powers of evil, bemoaning his folly. We must "pull him out of the fire." It were well if Christians would ponder more deeply those words of awful import: "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn to death, and those that are ready to be slain, if thou sayest, behold, we knew it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it, and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works:"[3] and those words, too, so full of encouragement, "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Every Christian is bound personally to perform such acts of mercy within his own sphere of activity, and by his influence and property to give support to all scriptural plans for alleviating and removing the spiritual miseries of men both at home and abroad. Our pity should take the form of constant persevering prayer, for the work is more God's than man's; but it should take the form, too, of cheerful, liberal, regular contribution, and personal exertion, for the work is

[1] Psal. cxix. 158, 136. [2] Wardlaw. [3] Prov xxiv. 11, 12.

man's work as well as God's; and God's work by man, God being the primary agent, man the active instrument. That man surely has no bowels of compassion for perishing men, no christian pitifulness, who can see thousands of them falling over the precipice into perdition, without shedding a tear over their hopeless misery, and thousands more rushing onwards towards that precipice, without attempting to arrest their course. Were Christians as pitiful as they should be, as they might reasonably be expected to be, there would be no want of christian missionaries either for home or foreign service, and no want of funds for their support.

Pity for the bodily wants and miseries of men must also be manifested in appropriate, wise, vigorous, persevering endeavors for their relief. The Christian's sympathy must not remain hidden in his bosom, a source merely of painful or pleasant excitement to himself. It must not expend itself in words of commiseration. It must take the form of sacrifice and exertion. He must not content himself with saying to the houseless, ill-clad, shivering object of his compassion, "be ye clothed, be ye warmed;" he must, if it be in his power, give him the things which are needful for the body. This is the pity which characterized the patriarch Job: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him: The blessing of him that was ready to perish came on me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy: I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame: I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not, I searched out." [1] This is the pity of which the divine approbation is so strikingly declared by the prophet Isaiah. The Lord promises to "guide continually," and to bless abundantly, the man who "deals his bread to the hungry, and brings the poor who are cast out to his house; who, when he sees the naked, covers them, and hides not himself from his own flesh; who draws out his soul to the hungry, and satisfies the afflicted soul." [2] And this is the pity which will meet with the solemn approval of the Supreme Judge, when from his great white throne in the heavens he pronounces the sentences which are to fix the eternal state of men and angels: "Then shall the king say to them on the right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me: Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." [3]

It is thus only that christian pitifulness can have that character which our Lord requires when he says, "Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful," for His pity was active pity. "For the great love wherewith he loved" miserable men, he spared not his Son, devoted him for us as a victim, gives him to us as a Saviour, and gives us all things with him, "blessing us in him with all heavenly and spiritual blessings." It is thus only that christian pity can form

[1] Job xxix. 11–16. [2] Isa. lviii. 7, 10. [3] Matt. xxv. 34–36.

a part of that resemblance to our Lord in which true christian holiness consists. He, as well as his Divine Father, not only pitied, but saved, and saved at what an expenditure of sacrifice, and toil, and suffering! "Though in the form of God, he humbled himself," laid aside the glories of that form, took on him the nature of a man, the form of a servant, the likeness of a sinner, becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." With what indefatigable activity, with what disinterested self-denial, with what patient endurance, did he seek to relieve the wants, to remove the miseries of men! It was his meat to do the benignant will of his Father in heaven, in showing mercy to the miserable. "He went about doing good." This was his Father's business, about which he was always to be found engaged. He embraced every opportunity of manifesting his pity, showing mercy; and, not contented with answering applications made to him, he often went in quest of objects of compassion, to comfort and relieve them. In their measure Christians must thus be pitiful, for it is only thus that they can have evidence that the mind which was in Christ is in them, and that they are His, having his Spirit dwelling in them.

There are two principles on this subject which must be held with equal firmness. The one is, that external acts of beneficence in supplying want and relieving distress, though in themselves good and useful, if disjoined from the faith of the gospel, and the pity which it uniformly excites, and which it alone can excite, are no evidences of christian character, and cannot be accepted of God as part of the living sacrifice, with which alone, for Christ's sake, he is well pleased. The other is, that wherever the principle of christian pity exists, it will manifest itself by producing its appropriate effects. Where the ability and opportunity to do good exist, and yet no good is done, professions of sympathy with human misery, however fervent, must be hypocritical; and however they may impose on man, which they do to a far less extent than they who deal in them seem to suppose, must be regarded with abhorrence by him who "desireth truth in the inward part."

It scarcely needs to be remarked, that the form and degree of the manifestation of that christian temper which is enjoined in the text, must depend on the circumstances in which the individual who cherishes it is placed. A kind look, a soothing word, a compassionate tear, a cup of cold water, are sometimes both more genuine expressions of christian pity, and more effectual means of gaining its object, the alleviation of suffering, than the most costly pecuniary offerings.

This pitiful, compassionate disposition is not to be limited to any particular class of sufferers. It is not to be confined to relations or friends, to fellow-Christians or fellow-citizens. Wherever there is misery there should be commiseration; and wherever there is the power to relieve, there should be relief. "Christian pity is a prime lineament of the image of God; and the more absolute and disengaged it is in regard to those towards whom it acts, the more it is like unto God; looking upon misery as a sufficient incentive of pity and mercy, without the ingredient of any other consideration. It is

merely a vulgar piece of goodness to be helpful and bountiful to friends, or to such as are within appearance of requital. It is a trading commerce that; but pity and bounty which need no inducements but the meeting a fit object to work upon, where it can expect nothing save only the privilege of doing good, which is in itself so sweet, is god-like indeed, like HIM who is rich in bounty, without any necessity, yea, or possibility of return from us; for we have neither anything to confer upon him, nor hath he need of receiving anything, who is the spring of goodness and of being."[1]

At the same time, it must not be forgotten, that while christian pity leads those under its influence to compassionate and relieve all the indigent and wretched as they have opportunity, it impels them with peculiar force to relieve the wants of those with whom they are most intimately connected. The man who speculates and talks of universal philanthropy, and even makes exertions in behalf of a benevolent object, if it be but on a sufficiently magnificent scale, while, in the circle of his family or neighborhood, he does little or nothing to relieve suffering and supply want, may without breach of charity be set down as a pretender to a character that does not belong to him; and the consistency of his christian profession may well be questioned, whatever we may think of its sincerity, who, while manifesting zeal for diminishing the sufferings, and promoting the improvement of the inhabitants of distant lands, is inattentive to the distress and destitution with which he is surrounded; who, while he professes to feel for Negroes, and Tartars, Turks, and Jews, seems to have no bowels of compassion for his countrymen, who are destitute of the necessaries of life, or are perishing for lack of knowledge.

Such, then, is the christian pitifulness, which the apostle enjoins as a part of "a conversation honest among the Gentiles," a means of constraining those who "spoke evil of them" ignorantly and falsely, "as of evil-doers," to form a more favorable opinion both of them and of their religion, a means of "putting to silence the ignorance of such foolish men," of winning those without the word, who will not obey the word, of making those ashamed who falsely accused their good conversation in Christ.

It requires but little reflection to perceive, that the cultivation and display of this amiable temper are well fitted to gain these ends. The efforts of christian piety, in the way of attempts to relieve the spiritual wants of mankind, not unfrequently excite the resentment of those who are their immediate objects, and draw forth the ridicule of ungodly observers. Yet even these, when obviously springing from genuine, though in the estimation of unconverted men, misguided benevolence, produce on the whole a favorable impression, both of their authors and of their religion. While on the other hand, apathy and inaction, on the part of professed Christians, in reference to the removal of evils, which if there be any truth in the Bible, are the greatest of all man's miseries, necessarily awaken in the mind of reflecting infidels doubts with regard to their sincerity, and give plausibility to the suggestion, that Christianity does not possess the power

[1] Leighton.

which it lays claim to, as a transformer of the character, and director of the conduct.

Few things are more fitted to soften prejudices against, and produce a disposition fairly and favorably to consider the claims of, Christianity, than christian individuals and societies, cheerfully, and and liberally, and laboriously supporting every probable scheme that is brought forward for lessening the mass of human suffering, in the form of poverty and disease, and for increasing the sum of human health and enjoyment. These are subjects in which men of the world can take an interest, and of which they can form a just judgment. Of the excellence of peculiar doctrines of Christianity, of the internal holiness which the faith of these doctrines is intended to produce, and actually does produce, they can form no just estimate, and "they speak evil of things which they know not." But to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to console the distressed, to provide means of recovery for the bodily or mentally diseased, appear to them "things good and profitable unto men;" and when they perceive Christians discovering a readiness to make sacrifices, to expend time, and property, and labor, to gain such objects, in a degree far superior to that of men not possessed of christian principles, the natural effect is, to lead them to inquire into the cause of the difference; and finding, what Christians should never be backward to avow, that such exertions are the result of their peculiar views and feelings as Christians, their prejudices are softened, and they are furnished with a motive to examine into what these principles are, and are placed in more favorable circumstances for entering on such an examination, and conducting it to a desirable issue. This consideration, of itself, ought to be felt by every Christian as a powerful motive to comply with the injunction in the text, "Be pitiful."

I conclude this division of the discourse by two quotations; the one the words of the Apostle Paul, the other the words of our Lord Jesus: the first placing in a strong light the peculiar reasons which urge Christians to be pitiful and kind; the second, the absolutely monstrous character of the opposite disposition, in all who live under such a dispensation of mercy as is revealed in the word of the truth of the gospel; "Be gentle, showing all meekness unto all men: for we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying: and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, in order that they who have believed in God, may be careful to maintain good works:" among the rest, the works of christian mercy. "These things are good and profitable unto men." [1]

So much for the words of the holy apostle. Now for the words of his and our Lord: "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto

[1] Tit. iii. 2–8.

a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents: But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredest me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him."[1] Thus he that shows no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy.

How powerful, how persuasive are these motives! Let us lay open our hearts to their influence. Let us be pitiful; pitiful to our relations, to our neighbors, to strangers, to enemies, to our fellow-Christians, our fellow-citizens, our fellow-men: pitiful to their bodies, pitiful to their minds, pitiful to their souls; pitiful in reference to the interests of time; above all, pitiful in reference to the interests of eternity. Let us "be merciful, as our Father who is in heaven is merciful."

§ 2.—*To be "courteous."*

The second injunction, in reference to the Christian's behavior to mankind at large, "be courteous," comes now to be considered. This injunction is certainly not "the first and great commandment" of the christian law. It is not even one of "the weightier matters of that law." But it is a part of that law; and the fact that it is so, is an illustration of the divine statement, that that law is exceeding broad. It may be considered as included in the second commandment of that law which is like the first; "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It is, indeed, an injunction of one of the minor manifestations of that love which is "the fulfilling of the law." It belongs to that class of commandments of which our Lord says, that he who breaks them, and teaches men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; while he who does, and teaches them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

That it forms, then, a proper subject of occasional illustration and enforcement by the christian minister, cannot be doubted by any one who believes that it is the christian pastor's duty to teach those under

[1] Matt. xviii. 23–34.

his care, "to observe *all* things whatsoever the Master has commanded;" and to "stir up" the purest minded of them, "by way of remembrance, that they may be mindful of the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:" I say a proper subject of *occasional* illustration; for he would ill deserve the appellation of a good minister of Jesus Christ, who should give to such topics as this the principal, or even a very prominent, place in his public or private teaching. "The grace of God," and "the godliness, righteousness, and sobriety," which it alone can effectually teach, should form the staple matter of our ministry. Pulpit instruction should consist habitually of the exposition of the doctrines, and the inculcation of the duties, the belief and practice of which are essential to the formation of the christian character, and the realization of the christian hope. What we are chiefly to testify is, "the gospel of the grace of God;" "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." But we must never forget that "every word of God is pure;" "all scripture is profitable;" and he who would be "perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work," must consider with attention, and receive with meekness, "every word which has proceeded out of the mouth of God." The christian minister is not to "shun to declare to his people all the counsel of God:" he is not to "keep back anything which may be profitable unto them." Whatever has appeared to God worthy of suggestion by his Spirit, and inscription by an apostle in that book, which is intended to be the permanent revelation of his mind and will, and the permanent guide of our faith and conduct, must be deserving of our considerate attention.[1]

The original term[2] which appears in the received text is capable of, and has received, different renderings. By our translators it is rendered courteous; by others not inferior to them in learning and judgment, it has been translated friendly-minded, obliging. This, too, is one of the comparatively few places where there is some uncertainty as to what is the genuine reading. In most of the critical editions of the New Testament, instead of the word, which signifies courteous or friendly-minded, we have a word which signifies humble or modest.[3] As there is thus some uncertainty as to the precise idea which the inspired writer expresses here; and as courtesy, and friendliness, and humility, are all of them tempers which, according to the christian law, Christians should cherish and exercise in reference to all mankind, and the display of which is well fitted to secure the object which the apostle has in view, the protection of Christianity from the misapprehensions and misrepresentations of an unbelieving world, and the recommending of it to their respectful notice and favorable consideration; instead of attempting to fix which of these three closely connected senses is the meaning of the apostle, I shall shortly advert to them all, as any of them *may* be, as one of them *must* be, his meaning.

I remark, then, in the first place, that the apostle may be considered as here enjoining courtesy. The English words, courtesy and courteousness, are derived from the term court, and are used in their primitive sense to describe that polish and refinement of manners

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Acts xx. 20, 27. [2] φιλόφρονες. [3] ταπεινόφρονες.

which prevail in the palaces of princes, and distinguish the intercourse of the great, just as that rudeness of manner which is opposed to these is termed rusticity; a word which primarily denotes the characteristic manner of the inhabitants of the rural districts, who, for the most part, belong to the humbler and less educated part of the community, and whose means of intercourse, even with each other, and still more with the polished portion of society, are necessarily circumscribed. This is the origin of the term, though there is abundant foundation for the remark of the poet:—

> "Courtesy is sooner found in lowly shades,
> With smoky rafters, than in tapestried halls
> And courts of princes, whence at first 'twas nam'd." [1]

I do not know that the subject of the apostle's injunction, in this view of it, can be better described than as a disposition, with its appropriate manifestations, to treat with becoming respect all with whom we are brought in connection, either occasionally or permanently, in the ordinary intercourse of social life; and to avoid everything in manner, language, and conduct, which may unnecessarily wound their feelings, or interfere with their enjoyment. It is, indeed, nothing else than enlightened benevolence manifesting itself in reference to little things. It supposes a capacity of entering into the feelings of others, and judging rightly as to what would gratify and what would wound their feelings, and a disposition to act towards them on the principle, "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." [2] As no man would be unjust or cruel, so few would be discourteous, if they habitually acted according to this golden rule.

Courtesy in general is opposed both to unsociableness and moroseness, the indisposition to mingle with our fellow-men, and the disposition, when we mingle with them, to make them uncomfortable. The courteous man finds a pleasure in the society of his fellow-men; and when in their society, discovers his satisfaction by endeavoring to make all around him happy. The particular form which courtesy assumes depends on the relation the courteous person stands to the object of his courtesy. If he is his superior, he regards and treats him with deference and respect; avoiding, on the one hand, all impertinence and presumption, and uncalled for obtrusive display of independence, and, on the other, all man-worship, all cringing obsequiousness. If he is his inferior, he treats him with condescension and civility, like one who, in by far the most important points of view, stands on a level with himself; not coldly indifferent to, nor cruelly negligent of, his feelings, but disposed to respect his rights, and to promote his happiness. If he is his equal, he treats him with affability; he is not morose, but conciliatory; not sullen, but cheerful. He is attentive; ready to give, ready to receive, the tokens of mutual respect. He is disposed to please, and to be pleased, not fretful or quarrelsome, or contemptuous, ever ready to put the best construction on words and actions; indisposed to take, and careful not to give, offence.

[1] Shakspeare. [2] Matt. vii. 12.

The courtesy which the apostle enjoins in the text must not be confounded with that artificial polish of manners which marks the higher classes of society. Christian courtesy may be combined with this artificial politeness; and the combination is beautiful, a gem richly set, "apples of gold in pictures of silver," a fair body with a fairer soul; but they are often to be found separate. Many who are distinguished by this artificial politeness are entire strangers to christian courtesy; and many are habitually and thoroughly courteous who have had no opportunity of acquiring even the first elements of this artificial politeness. In very many cases artificial politeness is systematic hypocrisy: it is a mask concealing truth, and exhibiting falsehood; the not appearing to be what we are, or the appearing to be what we are not. Sentiments and feelings are often strongly expressed, when they exist only in a very inferior degree, or, it may be, where they do not exist at all, or where sentiments and feelings of a directly opposite kind exist. Under a pretence of studying the feelings of others, the most malignant selfishness often seeks gratification: under the guise of the most courteous demeanor and language, the most unkind and contemptuous feelings are frequently cherished and expressed; and he who is studiously courteous to certain individuals and classes, according to the laws and usages of a conventional politeness, may be, and not uncommonly is, characterised by an utter disregard, an entire want of respect, for the feelings of other individuals and classes.

Christian courtesy, like all christian social virtues, originates in that love of man which flows from the love of God, and grows out of the knowledge and belief of the truth. The Christian regards all men as the children of God; endowed with reason, destined to immortality, capable of being, through the atoning blood and sanctifying Spirit of Jesus Christ, made fit for the most intimate fellowship with God in knowledge, and holiness, and blessedness. He regards the arrangements of society as the result of Divine appointment and agency; and hence learns that respect for all men, that honor for all in authority, and that cordial sympathy with all in the humbler stations of society, which naturally express themselves in a courteous demeanor. [1]

While there may be conventional politeness where there is no true courtesy, and true courtesy where there is little conventional politeness, yet it deserves to be remarked, that, so far as the established forms of intercourse in society are innocent, consistent with truth and integrity, christian courtesy will induce its possessor to conform to them. Wherever these forms imply falsehood, a higher law than that of custom or fashion, the law of God, forbids compliance. He must not use flattering words: he must not express sentiments which he does not believe, nor simulate affections which he does not feel; but that eccentricity which leads a man to disregard innocent social usages, may commonly be traced to pride and selfishness, principles the very reverse of those from which true christian courtesy springs.

This courtesy should be commensurate with our social relations.

[1] "This is affability of the heart, as well as of the demeanour: this is christian civility; as many degrees above modish civility, as to serve another effectually is better than to be *his most obedient servant*."—JORTIN.

We should be courteous to all. It should regulate the intercourse of kindred: no intimacy of relation can be sustained as a reason for dispensing with it. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, ought to treat one another courteously, with respect as well as with kindness. This greatly adds to the order and happiness of a family, and serves in some measure as a security for the performance of the higher duties. The manner in which the apostle enjoins the duty on servants is very striking: "Let as many servants as be under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honor: and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are christian brethren." [1] It should be manifested in the church of God. The pastors and elders should conduct themselves courteously to the humbler members of the flock; and the members of the congregation should, in their turn, cherish respectful sentiments, and express them in their language and conduct towards those that are over them in the Lord. This courtesy should also mark the conduct of the Christian in all his intercourse with the world. He is to show all courtesy, as well as "all meekness, to all men." But there is the less necessity for my dwelling on this part of the subject, that I have already had an opportunity of going somewhat into detail in the illustration of it, when explaining the injunction, "Honor all men."

It may be proper to notice here, that christian courtesy, as it does not require, nor indeed permit, the use of language, or the performance of acts, inconsistent with truth and integrity; so neither does it forbid the statement of sentiments, and the performance of actions which duty requires, however unpleasant they may be to the persons more immediately concerned, though it secures that such sentiments shall be stated, and such actions performed, in such a way as shall give no needless offence. "Neither is it to be supposed," to use the words of a living author, "that courtesy to others implies a forgetfulness of what we owe to ourselves, or a just sense of what others owe to us. Our Lord, who was the perfect example of courtesy, as of every other excellence, more than once evaded interrogatories which were intended to entrap him; and Paul, at Philippi, asserted his political rights as a Roman citizen, by refusing liberty when offered, unless granted in the manner in which it became him to receive it."

The illustration of christian courteousness by Archbishop Leighton, well deserves quotation: "This courteousness which the apostle recommends is not satisfied with what goes no deeper than words and gestures. That is sometimes the upper garment of malice, saluting him aloud in the morning whom they are undermining all the day, and sometimes though more innocent, it may be troublesome, merely by the vain affectation and excess of it; and even this becomes not a wise man, much less a Christian: an over studying or acting of this is a token of emptiness, and is below a solid mind. Nor is it that graver and wiser way of external plausible deportment, which fully answers this word. That is the outer half indeed; but the thing itself is a radical sweetness in the temper of the mind that spreads

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

itself into a man's words and actions, and this not merely natural (a gentle, kind disposition, which is, indeed, a natural advantage which some have), but spiritual, from a new nature descended from heaven, and so in its original nature it far excels the other, supplies it where it is not, and doth not only increase it where it is, but elevates it above itself, renews it, and sets a more excellent stamp upon it."

To the cultivation of this courtesy Christians are urged by most powerful motives. It is explicitly enjoined by the highest authority. He who commands us to be holy, commands us to be courteous. It is one way of fulfilling the great law of love, and it is among "the things which are honest, honorable, lovely, and of good report," which Christians are called to "think on," in order to their practising them. It deserves notice, that we find the law of God under the former dispensation breathing the same spirit. What are the commands, "When thou shalt lend thy brother anything, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge;" "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man. I am the Lord; Thou shalt not curse the deaf; Thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blind;" what are all these precepts inculcating, as they do, regard to the feelings and respect for the persons and situations of others, but instances of the endless variety of particular injunctions that are all bound up in the one brief law, "be courteous?"

Besides, courteousness is taught and enforced, not only by precept, but by example. He who is our great Exemplar, has set us an example of courtesy. There was nothing stern or boisterous in his language and demeanor. He did not "strive or cry." Little incidents mark character. "He," we are told, "prayed," that is courteously requested the crew of a boat in which he sat, "to put a little away from the land;" and there is a dignified courteousness as well as an unparalleled meekness in his behavior to his enemies: "Friend," said he to Judas, "wherefore art thou come?" and to those who smote him on the cheek, he said "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" It deserves notice, too, that he mildly reproved, for want of courtesy, Simon, the Pharisee, who entertained him at dinner: "Thou gavest me no water to wash my feet, thou gavest me no kiss, mine head with oil thou didst not anoint."

Some of the most distinguished of the saints, whose lives are recorded in Scripture, were distinguished for their courtesy. We shall select an example from each of the volumes of inspired truth. First, in this class, stands Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. What beautiful pictures of true politeness are presented to us in the following incidents of his history! "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and, when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said,

So do as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man: and he hastened to dress it. And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." [1]

The next incident is still more striking and affecting. "And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan; and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord: Thou art a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field: for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me, for a possession of a burying-place amongst you. And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: The field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed down himself before all the people of the land. And he spake unto Ephron, in the audience of the people of the land, saying, but if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, My lord, hearken unto me: The land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession, in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of the city." [2]

Our other example is the Apostle Paul; the most extraordinary merely human personage the New Testament makes us acquainted with. "Paul," it has been well said, "was the most distinguished for zeal as an apostle, the most remarkable for courtesy as a man. His language in some of his letters, and his conduct on certain occasions,

[1] Gen. xviii. 1–8. [2] Gen. xxiii. 1–18.

are a perfect model of polite and courteous phaseology, of bland and beautiful address." Take, as a specimen, his address to Felix, and view, in contrast with it, the fulsome flattery of Tertullus the orator: "And after five days, Ananias the high-priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: who also hath gone about to profane the temple; whom we took and would have judged according to our law: but the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee; by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him. And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so. Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."[1]

Even still more striking is the conversation between Paul and the Roman judge and king Agrippa. How far does the prisoner exceed the judge in dignified courtesy: "And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."[2]

What a beautiful instance of courteousness have we in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where, after having expressed a wish to go to Rome, that he might impart to the Christians there

[1] Acts xxiv. 1–16. [2] Acts xxvi. 24–29.

some spiritual gift; lest their feelings should be hurt, as if he thought all the advantage was to be on their side, he adds, "that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me!" And what a delicate touch of christian courtesy, as well as kindness, is to be found in the way in which he sends his affectionate remembrance to the mother of Rufus, at the thirteenth verse of the xvi. chapter of that epistle: "His mother, and mine!"

The Epistle to Philemon stands in relation to this subject as a composition, unrivalled and alone, both for its sentiments and language. Read it carefully, and say if the apostle does not appear a perfect master of the trains of thought, and forms of expression, most indicative of eminence in this christian grace of courtesy.

Few things tend more to make a christian conversation "honest," that is, honorable "among unbelievers," than the culture and display of courtesy; while its absence, and still more, the presence of opposite tempers and habits, gives occasion to those who are seeking occasion, both to think and speak unfavorably of Christianity and of Christians. The want of courtesy has, often, more than neutralized the influence of great talents and great excellence; and the possession of it has rendered men of but moderate talents or endowments greatly useful in promoting the christian cause. It is very justly remarked, by a christian moralist: "If religious, but coarsely-mannered persons, however safe they may be as to their own state, could be made aware how much injury their want of prudence and delicacy is doing to the minds of the polished and discriminating, who, though they may admire Christianity in the abstract, do not love it so cordially, as to bear with the grossness of some of its professors, nor understand it so intimately as to distinguish between what is essential and what is extrinsic, if they could conceive what mischief they do to religion by the associations which they lead the refined to combine with it, so as to lead them inseparably to connect piety with vulgarity, they would endeavor to correct their own taste, from the virtuous fear of shocking that of others."[1] It is greatly to be deprecated, thus to throw additional obstacles in the way of Christianity getting justice done to it; and of unbelievers becoming Christians. It is treating it unjustly, and them unkindly. Let no one then say of courtesy, it is a small matter thus to make so much of. It is a small matter compared with righteousness, mercy, temperance, and fidelity; but it is one of the matters of the christian law; and let us remember who it is who says, "These things ye ought to do, and not to leave the others undone."[2]

[1] Hannah More.

[2] What a beautiful picture of courtesy is given in "Matthew Henry's Life of his Father." It may not be improper to observe, what was obvious as well as amiable to all who conversed with him,—that he had the most sweet and obliging air of courtesy and civility that could be; which some attributed in part to his early education at court. His mien and carriage were always so very decent and respectful that they could not but win the hearts of all he had to do with. Never was any man farther from that rudeness and moroseness which some scholars, and too many that profess religion, either wilfully affect, or carelessly allow, themselves in, sometimes to the reproach of their profession. It is one of the laws of our holy religion, exemplified in the conversation of this good man, to "honor all men." Sanctified civility is a great ornament to Christianity. It was a saying he often used, 'Religion doth not destroy good manners;' and yet he was very far from anything like vanity in apparel or formality of compliment in address: but his conversation was all natural and easy to himself and others, and nothing appeared in him, which

Having gone so fully into the illustration and enforcement of christian courtesy, I must confine myself to a very few observations on the two other views which may be taken of the inspired injunction now before us.

I observed in the second place, that it may be considered as requiring a friendly or obliging temper or behavior. This, rather than "courtesy," strictly so called, is considered by many as the import of the original term. Christians should cherish and manifest a kind and obliging disposition to all. They are not only to be pitiful to sufferers, but kind and obliging to all; disposed to do good to *all*, as they have opportunity. This christian temper and habit is opposed to that disposition which Nabal[1] is the type, which prevents a man almost from speaking peaceably to his neighbor. There are men who can scarcely speak without saying, who can scarcely act without doing, something disobliging and displeasing to their fellow-men, "so churlish is their nature."

But it is opposed, not only to this most unlovely temper, but also to that retiredness of mind and temper which leads a man to shut himself up in himself, and his own immediate interests. Such a man may be peaceable and harmless, but he is not obliging and useful. He will neither say nor do an unkind or injurious thing, but the law of kindness is not on his lips; and his hand, though not wielding the weapons of warfare against his neighbor, is not employed in promoting his happiness. The Christian, in reference to all with whom he comes in contact, should discover a disposition to oblige and serve them.

This greatly tends to soften men's prejudices against religion, while an opposite temper and behavior on the part of professors are as powerfully calculated to harden their prejudices, and to give occasion to the adversaries to reproach Christians, and blaspheme Christianity and its Author.

I observed, in the third place, that the apostle may be considered as enjoining here humility or modesty. In many of the most ancient manuscripts, the reading is, "Be humble." Christians are not to think of themselves "highly," but "soberly." If they are Christians, they must believe their insignificance as creatures, and their demerit as sinners. They must believe that they are in their natural state thoroughly depraved; deeply, inexcusably guilty; righteously condemned; hopelessly wretched; and that if their state is altered, if their characters are transformed, if their prospects are improved, it is all owing to sovereign Divine kindness operating through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The native tendency of such views is to make a man humble and lowly in spirit; to make him feel that pride was not made for him. This should be the habitual temper of the Christian, and should give a decided character to his habitual demeanor and behavior. He should

even a severe critic could justly call affected. This temper of his tended very much to the adorning of the doctrine of God our Saviour, and the general transcript of so excellent a copy would do much toward the healing of those wounds which religion hath received in the house of her friends.—*Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Philip Henry*, p. 4. London, 1712.

[1] 1 Sam. xxv. 17.

be "clothed with humility:" "In lowliness of mind esteeming others better than himself."[1]

He should carefully avoid all kinds of pride as absurd and criminal, but especially spiritual pride. His conduct should never be such as to say to those about him, "Stand by thyself; come not near to me, I am holier than thou." He must not "mind high things;" he must "condescend to men of low estate;" he must not "be wise in his own conceit."[2]

The cultivation and display of humility are recommended by very numerous and powerful motives. It is the most reasonable of all things. Pride in a creature, in a sinner, is absolutely monstrous. Humility is very often enjoined in Scripture: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness. Let nothing be done through vain glory. Put on, as the elect of God, humbleness of mind."[3] No temper is more highly eulogized in Scripture; and to the possession of none are made promises more exceeding great and precious. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; to walk humbly with thy God. Though the Lord be high, he hath respect to the lowly. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Whosoever shall humble himself like this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. God forgetteth not the cry of the humble. He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is humble and of a contrite spirit: to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."[4]

Humility formed one of the distinguishing ornaments of the character of our Lord. It was emphatically "the mind which was in Him,"[5] who was meek and lowly; who humbled himself, and came not to be ministered to, but to minister. And, finally, it is greatly fitted to lessen the prejudices of the world against Christianity, and to shut the mouths of those who calumniate it, as calculated to make men self-conceited, and despisers of all who do not embrace their opinions.

It is worthy of remark, that the last two christian tempers we have been illustrating, are, as it were, the elements of the first. Kindliness and humility naturally, necessarily, produce courtesy. Everything by which courtesy is violated, may be traced either to selfishness, the reverse of kindness; or to pride, the reverse of humility.

Thus have I shortly considered the tempers and conduct in reference to mankind at large, which the apostle enjoins on believers, in order that their conduct might be "honest among the Gentiles." I cannot conclude this department of the subject without remarking, what a wonderful book is the Bible! and what a universal remedy is Christianity for all the evils of man! There is nothing too great, nothing too little, for the Bible. It unfolds the principles which

[1] 1 Pet. v. 5. Phil. ii. 3. [2] Rom. xii. 16.
[3] Eph. iv. 1, 2. Phil. ii. 3. Col. iii. 12.
[4] Mic. vi. 8. Psal. cxxxvii. 6. Matt. v. 3; xviii. 4. Psal. ix. 12. James iv. 6. Luke xiv. 11. Isa. lvii. 15.
[5] Phil. ii. 3–11.

guide the government of the universe, and it gives directions for the regulation of man's every-day tempers and manners. It provides for the highest interests of the soul through eternity, and yet descends to point out the way, with wondrous minuteness of detail, in which most happiness may be attained by man during his short sojourn in the present state.[1] Christianity not only transforms the character, but improves the manners. It is the greatest tamer of savage man, as well as the only purifier of depraved man. There are, indeed, men, we confess it with regret, rude with it, but they would have been brutal without it.

Let us show our regard for the Bible by making the intended use of all its revelations. Let us show our regard to Christianity as a universal remedy, by submitting the whole frame of our natures, intellectual and active, to its healing influence. Let us see to it, that this portion of Scripture given by inspiration, be indeed profitable to *us*. It will be so only in the degree in which we are what it commands us to be; courteous, kindly, and humble. "Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves; for if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty," one of whose precepts we have been expounding, and "continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, that man shall be blessed in his deed."

III.—DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS UNDER PERSECUTION.

It is now time for us to turn our attention to the third class of duties enjoined by the apostle; the duties of Christians in reference to their persecutors, viewed with a particular reference to the influence, which the performance of these duties is calculated to have on the character both of Christianity and of Christians among unbelieving men.

§ 1.—*Abstinence from all resentful retaliation, and meeting injury and reproach by kindness both in conduct and language.*

The first duty, then, which the apostle enjoins on Christians, in reference to their persecutors, is abstinence from all resentful retaliation, and the meeting of injury and reproach by kindness both in conduct and language. The injunction and enforcement of this duty occupy the greater part of the paragraph from verse 9, down to the middle of verse 14. The duty, and the motives by which it is enforced, are then successively to be considered. The duty is thus described: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." The motives are four—1. Christians are "called"

[1] Binney.

to the discharge of this duty; verse 9. 2. They are called to this, "that they may inherit a blessing;" verse 9. These two motives are illustrated by a quotation from the Old Testament Scripture; verses 10–12. 3. This is really the way to escape with the least possible suffering; verse 13. And 4. If their peaceable, kind conduct, does not produce its proper result in others, still in thus suffering, Christians are blessed or happy; verse 14. Let us attend to these topics in their order.

(1.) *The duty explained.*

The duty enjoined is abstinence from all resentful retaliation, and the meeting of injury and reproach by kindness both in action and in words: "Render not evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." This injunction plainly goes on the assumption that they to whom it was addressed were exposed to injurious treatment, and contumelious reproach. Their Lord and Master, when he was on earth, was most injuriously and unkindly treated, and his character and conduct were the objects of the most malignant misrepresentation and cruel obloquy. He was denied not only what, as an immaculately innocent, and absolutely perfect man, the greatest, the most disinterested, the most unwearied, the most successful, of all philanthropists and public benefactors, a fully accredited divine messenger, an Incarnation of the Divinity, he had the strongest claims to; he was denied the common rights of humanity, and was represented as a demoniac and blasphemer, a teacher of error, and a stirrer up of sedition; "a glutton and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And he distinctly warned his followers that they should meet with similar usage: "The servant," said he, "is not greater than his Lord. They have persecuted me; they will also persecute you. In the world ye shall have tribulation. They have called the master of the house Beelzebub; how much more them of his household? Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. Men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and shall cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake." [1]

These predictions were fulfilled to the letter in the case of the apostles and many of the primitive Christians. They were "despised and buffeted, reviled and defamed, made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things." "They were troubled, perplexed, and persecuted. They endured a great fight of affliction, they were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions." Some were "tortured, others had trials of cruel scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth." [2] They were everywhere spoken against as despisers of the gods, haters of the human race, and perpetrators of the most shocking impurities and barbarities.

[1] John xv. 20; xvi. 33. Matt. x. 25; xxiv. 9.
[2] 1 Cor. iv. 9–13. 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. Heb. xi. 36, 37.

In succeeding ages comparatively few Christians have been exposed to such extremity of ill usage; yet in every age the apostle's declaration has been verified. "They that *will* live godly," are determined to act out the principles and precepts of Christianity, "*must* suffer persecution." [1] No consistent Christian passes through this world without personal, experimental evidence that "this world is not his friend, nor this world's law;" and he who has never suffered in any way for his religion, who is an entire stranger to "the reproach of Christ," has some reason to read with alarm the words of our Lord: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." [2]

Whatever be the degree of ill usage, whatever the measure of opprobrious language to which the Christian may be exposed, his duty is not "to render evil for evil, or railing for railing." There is nothing inconsistent with christian principle and feeling in endeavoring, by using such means as law warrants, to disarm the man who has already wounded me, and who shows a disposition to repeat the injury: to shut the mouth which has already calumniated me, and seems ready to pour forth additional torrents of abuse. Regard to society, and indeed to the poor infatuated individual himself, even more than a due respect to my own interests and feelings, may make this even my duty. But I must not seek to injure him. I must not inflict undeserved, nor even unnecessary suffering. Restraint, even punishment, may not be evil: it may be benefit to the individual as well as to society; but even in securing this I must avoid resentful feeling. I must not seek to avenge myself. And as to railing, reproachful, contumelious language, I may, in many cases I ought to, rebut false charges, which, if credited, might injure my reputation and lessen my usefulness; and in doing this, it may be absolutely necessary to state and substantiate what will necessarily lower the character of the railer; but I must make no statement, however true, of a disadvantageous kind, which self-defence or public duty does not require; and in making such statements, I must keep at the greatest distance from everything like abuse. I must not speak angrily, contemptuously, reproachfully, spitefully, provokingly.

There are some men who seem to think that they have done their duty in this respect, when they have refrained from injuring those who have never injured them; from speaking evil of those who have never spoken evil of them; but that injury warrants injury, and evil-speaking sanctions evil-speaking in return. But as the good archbishop says, "One man's sin cannot procure privilege to another to sin in that or the like kind. If another has broken the bonds of allegiance to God, and charity to thee, yet thou art not the less tied by the same bonds still." [3] Besides, to act thus is a trenching on the divine prerogative, as well as a violation of the divine commands. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." [4]

But this is only the one part, and the least part, of the Christian's duty to him who, unprovoked, injures and maligns him: "Contrariwise

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 12. [2] John xv. 19. [3] Leighton. [4] Rom. xii. 19.

render blessing." To "bless" is frequently significant of kindness generally—kindness embodied in deeds as well as in words. It is the duty of the Christian to render benefit for injury, blessing for railing. He is to "do good to those who hate him," to do whatever lies in his power to promote their real welfare, to go out of his way to do them a service, and, not satisfied with his own efforts to advance their happiness, he is to call in the aid of infinite power, and wisdom, and kindness, by the prayer which has power with God. He is to "pray for them who despitefully use him and persecute him."[1] To "bless" here, however, does not seem to mean either generally to do good or to invoke the divine blessing, though to do both, as we have seen, is the Christian's duty to his enemy. It is the opposite of railing; it denotes the Christian's duty to speak courteously and kindly to, and, as far as truth will admit, well of, the railers.

The duties here enjoined are just various modes of expressing of that love to enemies which our Lord requires from all his disciples. Without this love they cannot be performed. With this love this command will not be found a grievous one; for love can intentionally do no harm to its object; love naturally prompts to do all practicable good to its object. I may pity, I may blame, I may even punish, the object of my love; but I cannot do what is intended, what, in my view, is calculated, to injure him.

There is nothing unreasonable, nothing impracticable, in the requisitions before us. We are not required to regard the wicked with the sentiments of complacent esteem, with which we regard the good. We are not required to regard the man who has injured us with the same feelings of grateful affection with which we regard our friends and benefactors; but we are required to cherish towards our enemies, however wicked and depraved and malicious, a sentiment of genuine good-will; to be sincerely desirous of their real welfare and happiness; never to lift up the hand against them, except self-defence or the public good require it; to forbid so much as a finger to move, a wish to stir, against them at the instigation of malice; to have no pleasure in any of their sufferings; to feel no joy when they stumble; to be ever ready to relieve them when in a situation which makes them the fit objects of rational benevolence; and not to be more backward to show towards them the offices of kindness, which man owes to man, than to those who have never done us an injury.

If such is the conduct and the language by which a Christian should be characterized, in reference to his worst enemies, those who hate and persecute him because of his religion, what are we to say of those professors of Christianity, who treat those whom they call brethren with injustice and unkindness, and scourge them, unoffending and uncondemned, with malignant insinuation, railing accusations, and contemptuous abuse. The least we can say, is, with Archbishop Leighton, to remark, that they are "an unchristian kind of Christians;" to warn them to beware what spirit they are of; to bid them remember this is not the spirit of Him who, even "when reviled, reviled not again;" and ponder the weighty truths, that "he who has not the Spirit of Christ is none of his;" and that for brethren to bite and devour one

[1] Matt. v. 44.

another, for one servant to beat his fellow-servants, is neither becoming nor safe. The Great Judge obviously accounts such conduct immoral in no ordinary degree. When he is setting in order the sins of the forgetters of God, next after companionship with thieves and adulterers, he charges them with this, "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, thou slanderest thine own mother's son." [1]

(2.) *The duty enforced.*

This injunction is enforced by powerful motives. To this mode of conduct Christians are "called:" To this mode of conduct they are called, in order "that they may inherit a blessing:" This mode of conduct is of all others the best fitted to secure from suffering: And finally, in cases in which, after all, Christians are exposed to suffering, they are blessed in *thus* suffering. Let us shortly explain these statements, and show their force as motives.

(1.) Christians are called to the course of conduct which the apostle has been recommending. "Hereunto ye are called." To no duty are Christians more explicitly called. Hear the words of our one Master in heaven: "Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." This was the doctrine of the scribes, and it was but too fully acted out in the conduct of their disciples, the Pharisees. But hear the law of the kingdom: "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." [2]

The call of his word is seconded by the call of his example. He has left us a pattern that we should follow his steps. He has fully exemplified his own precept; and his call, in reference to this height of moral excellence, is not, 'Go up yonder, but come up hither.' When reviled, he did not revile again; when injured, with power to punish, he went on to bless. "Father," said he with his dying lips, in reference to his murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." "When we were ungodly, sinners, enemies, in due time He died for us." [3]

The call is repeated by one of his apostles, who had drunk deep into his spirit: "Recompense to no man evil for evil: bless them that curse you; bless, and curse not. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head," which may melt his cold heart into ingenuous shame and grateful affection. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." [4]

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 23. Rom. viii. 9. Psal. l. 19.
[2] Matt. v. 43–48.
[3] Luke xxiii. 34. Rom. v. 6, 8, 10.
[4] Rom. xii. 14, 17, 19–21.

Paul's conduct, like that of his Master, corresponded with his words. How did he labor and pray for the salvation of his worst enemies! It is in reference to those who sought his life, and would have rejoiced in his ruin, that he says: "My heart's desire and prayer for them is, that they may be saved. I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart. I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." It was in reference to those who reviled him that he says: "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." [1]

But the call not to render evil for evil, railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing, is to be found in the Old Testament as well as in the New. It comes from David as well as from his Son and Lord; from Solomon as well as from Paul. Acting on the principles laid down by his beloved brother Paul, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and that "whatsoever things were written beforetime, were written for our instruction," Peter here quotes a passage from the book of Psalms, in illustration of both parts of the complex motive, "Hereunto were ye called, that ye might inherit a blessing." The passage is to be found in the thirty-fourth Psalm; and as the words before us do not exactly correspond in words, either to the Hebrew text or the Greek translation, though in meaning it exactly agrees with both, it is probable that the apostle quoted from memory, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The words are: "For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it; for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." In these words, we have evidence that Christians are called not to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing. They are required to "refrain their tongue from evil, and their lips that they speak no guile; to eschew evil and do good; to seek peace, and pursue it." And we have also evidence that they are called to this in order that they may inherit a blessing. It is thus that they are to escape a curse; "for the face of the Lord is against them who do evil:" and it is thus that they are to obtain the life they love, and the good days they desire. It is thus that they are to secure the complacent eye and the propitious ear of God. It is to the illustration of the first motive, "Hereunto are ye called," that I am now inviting your attention.

"Hereunto are ye called;" for what says the Scripture? "Refrain thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile." "Evil" is here injury, wrong; and the whole injunction is equivalent to, 'Neither by open calumny, abuse, or railing, nor by secret, guileful, deceitful surmisings, injure any man.' The command is universal in its reference, and therefore includes enemies as well as others. It is no reason why I should injuriously speak evil, whether openly or secretly of a man, that he is my enemy. If I am called to refrain my tongue from evil, then I am called, too, not to render railing for railing.

"Eschew evil and do good." When we look at the connection, we

[1] Rom. ix. 1–3; x. 1, 2.

cannot doubt that evil here, as in the former clause, is wrong or injury. Carefully abstain from doing any injury to any human being. As the Apostle Paul explains this very expression, "Abhor that which is evil."[1] Regard every act of injury with abhorrence. But the psalmist calls on us not only to do no harm to any, but to do good to all. Do good. Good is here *benefit;* as in the precept, "do good to all men, as ye have opportunity."[2] Make it your business to make men happy.

"Seek peace, and pursue it." Never quarrel with those with whom you are connected; and, if they discover a disposition to quarrel with you, leave off such contention before it be meddled with. If they strike one blow, do not you by returning it give them an excuse for striking a second. "Pursue peace," even when it seems about to fly away; "follow peace with all men." "As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."[3]

There may be something fanciful in Leighton's remark, but it is beautiful and just: "We may pursue peace among men and not overtake it; we may use all good means and fall short: but pursue it up as far as the throne of grace; seek it by prayer, and that will overtake it; that will be sure to find it in God's hand, 'who stilleth the waves of the sea and the tumults of the people.' 'If he give quietness, who can give trouble?'" So much for the first motive, Ye are "called" to this mode of conduct. No part of the Christian's call is more explicit; few parts of it more frequently repeated.

(2.) The second motive is: Ye are called to this mode of conduct, in order that in following it "ye may inherit a blessing."[4] God does not mean, by requiring you to deny and mortify your resentful feelings, and submit to unavenged wrong, that you are to be ultimate losers. If you "refrain your lips from evil;" if you "eschew evil and do good;" if you "seek peace, and pursue it," you will obtain the life you love, you will "see good days." "God's eye will be on you; God's ear will be open to your prayers." While, on the other hand, "the face of the Lord will be against the ill-doer," the injurious man.[5] He can have no token of his complacency and approbation, for he does not possess it. Life is happiness; good days are happy days. Happiness consists in enjoying God's favor. His favor is life, his loving-kindness better than life. To have his eye resting complacently on us, to be objects of his love and care, to have his ear open to our prayers, to have him, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, always ready to listen to our petitions and supply our need,—this is life, this is happiness. While, on the other hand, to have his face set against us, to have his countenance covered with frowns, to have him looking at us as he did out of the pillar of cloud on the Egyptians struggling with the billows of the Arabian gulf,—this is misery.

Our obedience cannot indeed deserve this inheritance of blessing, though our disobedience well deserves the corresponding curse; but by God's appointment, and in the very nature of the case, while the benefits bestowed on men are "the gift of God through Jesus Christ," the result of sovereign kindness, manifesting itself in consistency with

[1] Rom. xii. 9. [2] Gal. vi. 10. [3] Heb. xii. 14. Rom. xii. 18. [4] Gal. iii. 13.
[5] Ira totam faciem—*πρόσωπον* commovet: amor oculos *ὀφθαλμοὺς* tingit.—BENGEL.

justice, through the mediation of our Lord, they can be enjoyed only in a state of conformity of mind and heart to the will of God, discovering itself in a cheerful obedience to his commandments. "In the keeping of his commandments there is great reward;" and it is through "a constant continuance in well-doing," that the full enjoyment of the inheritance of blessing is to be reached. It is in "adding to faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly-kindness, and charity," that we are to enjoy the earnest of the inheritance; and it is in persevering in this course, that we are to look at last for "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; the inheritance itself, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; laid up in heaven" for all who, through faith and patience, are followers of those who have already entered on its possession.

(3.) The course recommended is of all others the best fitted to secure from suffering: "Who will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" The phraseology here requires some explanation. The phrase rendered "that which is good," may, viewed by itself, with at least equal propriety, be rendered 'Him who is good.'[1] The word "followers" signifies imitators; and in every case in which it is used in the New Testament, has a reference to persons. *Good* is here, as throughout the passage, equivalent to *kind.* If the rendering adopted by our translators be the true one, then a follower of that which is good is one who imitates what is kind in the character and conduct of others. If the rendering, 'Him who is good,' be preferred, then it refers either to God, who is, by way of eminence, the good or benignant One; and in this case it puts us in mind of what our Lord says, "Do good to them that hate you, that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven;" and of what the apostle says, "Be followers of God as dear children;" or it may refer to our Lord, who, in not reviling when reviled, in not threatening when he suffered, set his people an example that they should follow his steps; and who, both in the preceding and succeeding context, is represented by the apostle as our great exemplar.[2]

The meaning, in all these various modes of exposition, is substantially the same: If you in your character manifest that benignity, even towards enemies, which characterizes the divine administration, and which so remarkably distinguished the words and actions of him who was "God manifest in flesh," if ye are thus characterized by harmlessness, and quiet unresisting suffering, "who," says the apostle, "will harm you?"

The meaning of this interrogation is not, 'No one will harm you;' for the greatest harmlessness, and forbearance, and patience will not in every case protect from even very severe suffering; but the meaning is, 'If anything can protect you, this will.' If, discovering these tempers, you yet suffer; were you discovering opposite ones, you would suffer still more. It is justly remarked, "that there are virtues which are apt, in their own nature, to prevent injuries and affronts from others. Humility takes away all occasion of insolence from the proud and haughty; it baffles pride, and puts it out of countenance.

[1] Ἐὰν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μιμηταὶ γένησθε. [2] Matt. v. 48. Eph. v. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 21–23.

Meekness pacifies wrath, and blunts the edge of injury and violence. Patient suffering, and the returning of good for evil, is apt to allay and extinguish enmity, to subdue the roughest disposition, and to conquer even malice itself. Besides, the providence of God usually watches over the interests of those who, instead of seeking to avenge themselves, commit themselves in patience and well-doing to Him who judgeth righteously. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he' often, in a very remarkable manner, 'maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.' It is true of more than the patriarchs during their wanderings, that God 'suffers no man to do them wrong.'" [1]

The words may with equal propriety be rendered, Who *shall* harm you? as Who *will* harm you? God is with them, who can be effectually against them? who can really harm them? "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." "He shall deliver thee from six troubles; yea, in seven, there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh." "Fear not, then, the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation." [2]

(4.) The last motive to the course of conduct recommended is, that should they, as was not unlikely, notwithstanding their harmlessness and patience, be exposed to suffering for righteousness' sake, for the sake of the righteous cause of their Lord, still they should be blessed. "But, and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." It is great honor to suffer shame and injury in such a cause. The peculiar aids of the Good Spirit are secured to such sufferers. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth on you." [3] Such sufferings identify those who are exposed to them, as to character and prospects, with the holy men who, in former ages, through much tribulation, have entered into the kingdom; and to them are given peculiar, exceeding great, and precious promises, well calculated to make them "count it all joy when brought into such trials." "It is a faithful saying, If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." "Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time,

[1] Scott. [2] Psal. xci. Job v. 19–21. Isa. li. 7, 8. [3] 1 Pet. iv. 14.

houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mother, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come life everlasting."[1]

And we find that, in fact, it has been so. Most wonderfully has God enabled his people to magnify his faithfulness, by showing how happy they were in the midst of their sufferings. Oh! how happy were the apostles Peter and John, after being threatened by the Sanhedrim, when, being "let go, they went to their own company," and "lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus."[2] Yes, they were happy. "The Spirit of God and glory rested on them." How happy were Paul and Silas, though they had many stripes laid on them, and been thrust into the inner prison, and had their feet made fast in the stocks, when, through the overpowering force of divine joy, they "at midnight prayed and sang praises to God, so that the prisoners heard them!"[3] Many such sufferers have gloried in their tribulation, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; for the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them."[4]

In addition to these particular motives to the conduct recommended, there is the general one, which equally applies to all the duties here enjoined in the paragraph: its tendency to reflect credit on their religion and Lord. But I shall have an opportunity of considering this, after I have illustrated the other injunctions which the apostle gives, respecting the conduct of Christians in reference to their persecutors.

The temper which we have been illustrating and recommending—a forbearing, forgiving disposition, is, by worldly men, very generally underrated, and even despised, as indicating meanness of spirit, and a want of force of character. But such an estimate is owing to ignorance of this temper, arising, in many cases, out of a moral incapacity to form a just idea of it. This temper springs from enlightened moral principles; it is consistent with, and indeed expressive of, true magnanimity. A Christian forbears to retaliate on his enemy, not because he fears him, but because he does not fear him. The calmness with which he receives injuries and insults has no more connection with fear than the tranquillity and silence of heaven when insulted by the voice of human blasphemy.

"Let the world account it a despicable simplicity, seek you still

[1] James i. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12, Matt. v. 10, 12; Mark x. 30.
[2] Acts iv. 23–30. [3] Acts xvi. 25. [4] Rom. v. 3–5.

more of this dovelike spirit, the spirit of meekness and of blessing. It is a poor glory to vie in railings, to contest in the power of resenting wrong: the most abject persons have abundance of that great spirit, as foolish, low-minded persons account it. The true glory of man is to pass by a transgression. This is the noblest victory. And to excite us to aspire after it, we have the highest example. God is our pattern here. Men esteem much more some other virtues which make more show, and trample on love, compassion and meekness. But though these violets grow low, and are of a dark color, yet they are of a very sweet and diffusive smell. They are odoriferous graces. And the Lord propounds himself as our example in them. To love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you, is to be truly "the children of your Father who is in heaven; who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good." Be you like that sun: however men behave themselves, keep on your course, and let your benignant influence rest on all within your sphere. Jesus Christ, too, sets in himself these things before us. "Learn of me," says he, not to heal the sick, or to raise the dead, but "to be meek and lowly in heart;" to forbear and forgive; to repay injury with benefit, execration with benediction. If you are his followers, this must be your way, for "hereunto are ye called," and you have much to encourage you to walk in it; for this is the end of it, "the inheritance of a blessing." [1] Of this inheritance of blessings you have already the rich earnests, the sweet foretastes; and yet a little while, when a few more years are come, the possession, in all its inestimable preciousness, in all its immeasurable dimensions, shall be yours forever. And then will it be made to appear, that "faithful is He who hath called you," that the inheritance was safely laid up for you, and you safely kept for it; and that the afflictions of the present state were light in comparison to the weight of its glory, and but for a moment in comparison of the eternity of its endurance.

§ 2.—*Guarding against the fear of man by cultivating the due fear of God.*

I proceed now to the consideration of the second injunction laid on Christians exposed to persecution; and that is, to guard against the undue fear of man, by cultivating the due fear of God. While they were not to provoke their persecutors, they were not to quail before them. They were not to seek to obtain their favor, or escape their displeasure, by denying the truth or neglecting their duty. The injunction is contained in these words, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." [2]

In these words the apostle obviously refers to a passage in the prophecies of Isaiah: "For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me, that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary." [3] In this passage, as it stands in the prophet's oracle, there can be no doubt that

[1] Leighton. [2] See note A. [3] Isa. viii. 11, 13.

the fear of the unbelieving king and people of Judah, against which Jehovah warns the prophet and the pious Jews, is the fear which they entertained, a fear of the Assyrian monarch, leading them to distrust Jehovah, and seek after forbidden alliances with the idolatrous kingdom of Syria, and the apostate kingdom of Israel. Instead of fearing Sennacherib, and trusting in Rezin and in Pekah, he calls on them to fear and trust in Him as the Lord of Hosts; and to manifest this fear and trust by avoiding whatever he forbade, and doing whatever he commanded, notwithstanding all the hazards to which their obedience might seem to expose them.

In the passage, as quoted and applied by the apostle to the state of the Christians to whom he was writing, the expression "their terror," that is, plainly, the terror of those who persecuted them for righteousness' sake, does not seem so much to refer to the terror which these persons felt, or to the objects exciting that terror, as to the terror which they endeavored to strike into the victims of their malignity, and the objects which they held out to them to excite that terror. It seems just equivalent to the expression of the Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, "And" be "in nothing terrified by your adversaries." Let not "the fear of any evil they can inflict on you induce you to deny your Lord, and make shipwreck of your faith.

The slight diversity of meaning in the words as originally employed by Isaiah, and as here employed by Peter, needs neither excite surprise, nor give offence. Wherever a passage of Old Testament scripture is quoted in the New, to give evidence to a fact or principle, or to give authority to a precept, it must bear the same sense in the place where it is quoted as in the place where it originally occurs. Were it otherwise, just reason would be afforded for suspecting the inspiration, if not the honesty, of the writer employing the quotation. But when the words of the Old Testament are merely alluded to, employed by the New Testament writer to express his own ideas, the precise force of the words is to be gathered from the connection in which they are introduced; and there is nothing either to wonder at or to be offended by, though the thought clothed in them be somewhat different from that which they were originally employed to express. The judicious application of this principle, will free from all difficulty a variety of passages which have afforded plausible ground for cavil to infidels, and occasioned perplexity to inquirers and believers.[1]

Indeed, in the case before us, the object of fear to the Christian's persecutors was substantially the same thing as the object of fear which they held up to the minds of the Christians, in order to terrify them into apostasy. They themselves considered the loss of worldly good, the infliction of worldly evil, as the things above all other things to be feared; and therefore, judging of others by themselves, it was by presenting these to the minds of Christians, as the necessary consequence of their maintaining their faith and profession, that they sought to trouble them, and make them "fall from their steadfastness." The loss of property, the loss of reputation, the loss of friends, the loss of ease, the loss of life,—poverty, reproach, imprison-

[1] See note B.

ment, torture, death in its most frightful forms,—were presented before the mind of the Christian for the purpose of terrifying him into an abandonment of his Lord, and a compliance with the will of his enemies.

These, no doubt, were altogether very frightful objects. But, says the apostle, "Be not afraid of their fear." Show them that what would dismay them does not dismay you. Show them that no evil, however alarming, which they can threaten or inflict, can so trouble you as to induce you to deny the truth, or dishonor the Saviour.

This seems a hard saying, a difficult command; but it is not an unreasonable one. The persons addressed are supposed to be partakers of "like precious faith" with the apostles; to have laid hold of the hope set before them in the gospel, the hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, laid up in heaven for them, to which they are kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation. It is to very little purpose to call on mere professors of Christianity, men who "have a name that they live, but are dead," men who, being strangers to the faith of the gospel, must be strangers to the hope of the gospel, to make sacrifices for the cause of Christ, to remain unterrified amid such alarms, steadfast and immovable in the face of such danger. But to a genuine Christian it may well be said, "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man who shall be made as grass?" Thou needest not fear what man can do to thee. "Should such a one as thou flee?" [1]

Of how little good comparatively can man deprive *him?* How little evil comparatively can he inflict on *him?* How short is the season during which he can deprive him of blessings, or inflict on him sufferings. He may deprive him of his worldly substance; but he "knows in himself that he has in heaven a more enduring substance." He may make him "poor in this world;" but he remains "rich in faith," "rich towards God," an inheritor of "the true riches." He may deprive him of civil liberty; but he cannot take from him the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free. He may enslave his body; but he cannot enthral his spirit. The oppressor may hold

> "His body bound; but knows not what a range
> His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain;
> And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
> Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells." [2]

He may shut him out from intercourse with his friends; but he cannot deprive him of the guardianship of angels, of the fellowship of God. The Christian needs not fear banishment from one part of the earth to another; for wherever he is, he is a pilgrim and a stranger while here: "his citizenship is in heaven." He needs not fear death, but should rather welcome it, for that will convey him home to that better country, his true fatherland. Why should he fear man, "who, after he hath killed the body, has no more that he can do?" Besides, "all things shall work together for his good;" and "his light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will assuredly work out for

[1] Isa. li. 12. Neh. vi. 11.

[2] Cowper, Task 5.

him a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." Well, then, may the address be made to persecuted Christians, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."[1] And well may they reply, "We will not fear though the earth be removed, though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The Lord of HOSTS is with US: the God of Jacob is OUR refuge."[2]

Such, we apprehend, is the meaning of the apostle's first exhortation, though it may be right to state, before going farther, that some interpreters have considered this terror of the Christians' persecutors as a phrase to be interpreted in the same way as the expression, "the fear of Isaac;" an appellation used by Jacob for Jehovah as the object of his worship; the God of his fathers; "the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac;"[3] in which case Christians are cautioned against fearing the false deities of their heathen persecutors, and are called to fear, not them, but the only living and true God, Jehovah. This use of the expression is, however, very rare, and the context seems plainly to lead to the interpretation we have adopted.

The only way in which a Christian can rise to this noble superiority to the fear of man, is by having his mind habitually occupied with God.[4] We are delivered from the undue power of what is seen and temporal, when the eye of the mind is opened to see Him who is invisible, and that which is eternal. That Christians, exposed to persecution, may be enabled to comply with the injunction, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled," the apostle calls on them to "sanctify the Lord God in their hearts."

The primary idea expressed by the word generally rendered SANCTIFY, both in the Old and New Testaments, seems to be separation, especially separation or setting apart for a religious purpose.[5] Objects of worship, places of worship, instruments of worship, and worshippers, are represented as sanctified and holy; and as, under the Old Testament, things and persons set apart or consecrated were ceremonially pure, and as, under the New Testament dispensation, persons set apart by the Lord for himself, by the "sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth," are set apart that they may be spiritually pure, "holy and without blame before God," holy comes often to be used as equivalent to free from moral impurity, possessed of spiritual moral excellence; and sanctify is used as equivalent to make thus holy, when used to denote what God does to man; or to declare to be holy, or to treat as holy, when used to denote what man does to God. It is not very easy to say, with certainty, whether the word is here to be considered as used in its primary or in its secondary significa-

[1] Isa. li. 7, 8.
[2] Luke xii. 4. Rom. viii. 28. 2 Cor. iv. 17. Psal. xlvi. 2, 3, 11. [3] Gen. xxxi. 42.
[4] Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et je n'ai point d'autre crainte.—RACINE.
[5] Ἁγιάζω. קדשׁ.

tion. In either case the injunction is full of important meaning; and, indeed, the meaning in both cases is substantially the same.

God is, by way of eminence, the "Holy, holy, holy" One, the separate One,[1] "dwelling in the light which is inaccessible and full of glory;" completely removed from all defect and fault, from all that is weak and all that is wicked; free from that defectibility which belongs to created being; possessed of an infinity of all the excellences of which we see traces among his creatures; full of being, of intelligence, of power, of righteousness, of benignity; distinguished by eternal, immutable, absolute perfection, by a grandeur and an excellence, of which the highest conception we can form of grandeur and excellence comes infinitely short. His is being underived; liberty absolute; power unlimited and illimitable; knowledge intimate and infinite; wisdom unsearchable and unerring. And all this "excellent greatness," this "glorious majesty," is beautified by absolute moral perfection. His is a purity before which the holiness of angels waxes dim, and his a benignant tenderness, of which the yearning of a mother's heart is but a feeble figure. He is one who neither can be, purpose, say, nor do, anything that is not infinitely wise, just, and good. This is the holy, separated One.

This is what he is in himself. Let this be what he is to thee. Sanctify him in thy heart. Think of him as the Holy One. Separate from him in thy conceptions all that is imperfect, human, evil, capricious, changeable, malignant. Feel towards him as the Holy One. Let thy heart be, as it were, his temple; and there let him dwell alone in its inmost shrine, esteemed and loved, feared and trusted, in a manner altogether different from that in which any created being, however excellent, is esteemed and loved, feared and trusted. To give to any created being the kind, or degree of esteem, or affection, due to him, is to profane his name, to desecrate his temple, by introducing idols there. Treat him as what he is, and do this in thine heart, not only with thy lips by praise and prayer, not only in external acts of homage and obedience, but in thine heart, with thy whole intelligent, affectionate nature; really, not in profession merely, but worshipping Him who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth.

"Beware of an external, superficial, sanctifying of God, for he takes it not so; he will interpret that a profaning of him and of his name. Be not deceived, he is not mocked: he looks through all visages and appearances, in upon the heart; sees how *it* entertains him, and stands affected to him, if it be possessed with reverence and love more than either thy tongue or carriage can express; and, if it be not so, all thy seeming worship is but injury, and thy speaking of him is but babbling, be thy discourse never so excellent; and the more thou hast seemed to sanctify God, while thy heart has not been chief in the business, thou shalt not by such service have the less, but the more fear and trouble in the day of trouble, when it comes upon thee. No

[1] "Holiness in the Scriptures comprehends majesty, as well as holiness in the limited sense. God is holy, inasmuch as he is separated from every created and finite being, and lifted above them, particularly above sin, which can establish its seat only within the domain of finite beings. Isa. lvii. 15; xl. 25, 26. Hab. iii. 3. Psal. xcix. 3; cxi. 9. The signification of purity, so far from being the only one of קדוש cannot be considered even as the fundamental one."—HENGSTENBERG on Psal. xxii. 3.

estate is so far off from true consolation, and so full of horrors, as that of the rotten-hearted hypocrite. His rotten heart is sooner shaken to pieces than any other. If you would have heart's peace in God, you must have this heart-sanctifying of him. It is the heart that is vexed and troubled with fears. The disease is there; and if the prescribed remedy reach not there, it will do no good; but let your hearts sanctify him, and then he will fortify and establish your hearts."[1]

There are two illustrations given of this sanctification of Jehovah, in the passage in the prophecy of Isaiah to which the apostle refers. He who thus sanctifies the Lord of Hosts, Jehovah himself, or, as the apostle has it, the Lord God in his heart, makes him "his fear and his dread," and he finds him "a sanctuary;" and he is thus enabled not to be afraid of the fear of his persecutors, neither to be troubled. He who sanctifies the Lord in his heart, "makes him his fear and his dread;" that is, he fears him, and he supremely fears him. When the truth about the Divine character really dwells in the mind, the individual cannot but fear him. A holy awe fills the heart; not the fear that has torment, not the terrible apprehension of God as an omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise enemy, determined to destroy us; but such a veneration of his infinite greatness, and such an esteem of his infinite excellence, as are necessarily accompanied with a deep-seated conviction that his favor is happiness, his displeasure misery, and that it is madness to forfeit his approbation for any conceivable earthly good; madness to incur his displeasure, in order to avoid any conceivable earthly evil. And this fear is supreme. He makes HIM his fear and dread. HE seems to him the only being in the universe that is "worthy" *thus* "to be feared." Nothing in the wide compass of real or possible being is, in his estimation, so terrible as HIS frown, the loss of his favor, the incurring of his disapprobation.

But he who sanctifies the Lord God in his heart, not only makes him his fear and dread, cherishes a supreme reverence for him, but he finds him "a sanctuary," cherishes a supreme confidence in him. He in whose mind God is the object only of fear, has not sanctified God in his heart. He has not "seen God, neither known him;" for it is just as certain that none can know him without trusting in him, as it is that none can know him without fearing him. "They that know his name, put their trust in him."[2] They who really sanctify him in their heart, find in him a sanctuary, a place of refuge and security. They see that He, He alone, is a suitable upmaking portion to their soul; that from his infinite perfection, as manifested in the person and work of his incarnate Son, he is at once able and disposed to make them happy, in all the extent of their nature, up to their largest capacity of enjoyment, during the entire eternity of their being. What more is necessary to make one happy, happy forever, than infinite power, regulated by infinite wisdom, and influenced by infinite benignity?

The manner in which the sanctification of God in the heart, leading thus to supreme veneration for, supreme confidence in, Him, operates in raising the persecuted Christian above all the power of

[1] Leighton. [2] Psal. ix. 10.

worldly fears to dishearten him in, or terrify him out of, the onward path of faith, and profession, and obedience, is obvious. Fearing God, the Christian knows no other fear. "That fear, as greatest, overtops and nullifies all lesser fears. The heart possessed by this fear has no room for the others. It resolves the man, in point of duty, what he should and must do: that he must not offend God by any means. It lays down that as indisputable, and so eases the mind of doubtings and debates of that kind, whether I shall comply with the world and deny truth, or neglect duty, or commit sin, to escape reproach or persecution." He who, sanctifying God in his heart, has made him his fear and his dread, sees very clearly, feels very strongly, that he "ought to obey God rather than man;" and that the question is an equally clear one, whether viewed as a question of duty or a question of interest. "It seems to him immeasurably best to retain His favor, though, by taking the course that is necessary to secure this, he should displease the most respected and considerable person he knows. He holds it as absolutely certain that it is better, in every view of the case, to choose the universal and highest displeasure of the world forever, than his smallest disapprobation, even for a moment. One thing appears to him as self-evident, that the only indispensable necessity to him is to cleave to God, and obey him."[1]

We have some striking instances of the power of the fear of God to subdue, to annihilate, the fear of man, recorded in Scripture. When Moses' parents by faith sanctified Jehovah in their heart, making him their fear and dread, they at all hazards disobeyed the wicked edict requiring them to murder their son, and "were not afraid of the king's commandment;" and their illustrious son, under the influence of the same principle, "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king."[2] The fear of God annihilated in the minds of the three Hebrew youths the fear of the fury of the Babylonian tyrant, and the flames of his fiery furnace; and in the mind of Daniel, the fear of the loss of high station, and all the horrors of the den of lions.[3] It enabled the christian apostles to set at naught all the threats of their persecutors. It enabled their and our Lord, with all the shame and agony of the cross full in his view, to confess the truth, and finish the work which the Father had given him to do. This holy fear, with its kindred holy confidence, led him to "give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; to hide not his face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God," says he "will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they shall wax old as doth a garment; the moth shall eat them up."[4] And he calls on all his followers to follow in his steps; when exposed to suffering, to fear the Lord, to trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. This fear leads directly to this conclusion, and enables the Christian to hold it fast at all hazards,—

[1] Leighton. [2] Heb. xi. 23, 27. [3] Dan. iii. 6. [4] Isa. l. 7–9.

'It is not necessary to have the favor of the world, but it is necessary to have the favor of God; it is not necessary that I should live in comfort, nor indeed that I should live at all; but it is necessary that I hold fast the truth, that I should obey God, that I should honor HIM in life and in death.'

That confidence in God, which, equally with fear of him, is the result of sanctifying him in the heart, naturally also raises the persecuted Christian above the fear of man. He who knows God, and who believes that he has said, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee," may boldly say, will boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do to me;" "God is my refuge and my strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore I will not fear;" "God is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In him is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth to God. Also to thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy." [1] How reasonable then is it to trust in him? How unreasonable to fear them; and how powerfully is trust in him calculated to put down fear of them.[2]

Thus have I endeavored shortly to illustrate the second injunction given by the apostle to Christians as to their so conducting themselves under persecution, as that even their enemies might be compelled to honor both them and their religion: "Be not afraid of their terror, but sanctify the Lord in your hearts."

Sanctifying the Lord in the heart, and making him our fear and our confidence, is the duty of the Christian, not only when exposed to persecution for righteousness' sake, but at all times and in all circumstances; and it is the true and effectual antidote to all the fears and troubles of whatever kind that he is exposed to in the present state. The Christian is often harassed with fears in reference to his external circumstances. Let him sanctify the Lord in his heart; realize the truth respecting Him; fear Him; trust in Him; and he will thus learn to "be careful," that is, anxious, "about nothing." [3] When David sanctified God in his heart, he was delivered from all his fears; and this is his advice and encouragement to all who, like him, are involved in such perplexities, to fear and trust in the Lord: "O fear the Lord, all ye his saints: for there is no want to them who fear him. The young lions may lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none that trust in him shall be desolate." [4]

But the Christian is liable to fears and perplexities of a more painful kind still. The troubles of remorse, the fears of hell, sometimes agitate him. "The sorrows of death compass him; the pains of hell get hold of him. He has trouble and sorrow." He feels as if his

[1] Psal. lxii. 1, 2, 5–12.
[2] See note C.
[3] Phil. iv. 6.
[4] Psal. xxxiv. 9–10, 17, 22.

unseen foes were about to triumph over him, and that continued resistance is hopeless. But let him sanctify the Lord in his heart. Let him so realize the truth about HIM, as, while trembling at his word and standing in awe of his judgments, he at the same time trusts in his mercy and hopes in his promise; and he will be reassured and comforted. Let him contemplate at once the awful and amiable glories of his character as the God who cannot clear the guilty, and yet, through the propitiation he has set forth in the blood of his Son, pardons iniquity, transgression and sin, blotting them out for his own sake as "a just God and a Saviour," "just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;" [1] and he will find security and peace amid all the fightings without, and the fears within.

The way to have true rest in the heart is to have God there, through the knowledge and faith of the truth respecting him; and to sanctify him there, to cherish towards him those affections of supreme reverence and confidence to which he is entitled:—

> "He is the source and centre of all minds—
> Their only point of rest.
> From him departing, they are lost, and rove
> At random, without honor, hope, or peace." [2]

You, then, who would "dwell at ease, and be quiet from the fear of evil," seek to have the Lord God in your heart; seek to sanctify him there, by making him at once your fear and confidence.

It is thus that the sinner, as well as the saint, is to get rid of his fears. We say to the sinner, as well as to the saint, "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace: so good shall come to thee." [3] Know that his nature as well as his name is holy love. Let both these letters of his name be impressed on your heart, holiness and grace; and learn so to fear his holiness, and justice, and power, as to cease to oppose him, under a deep conviction that it is equally wicked and unwise, criminal and ruinous; O learn so to trust his grace and faithfulness, as gladly and gratefully to receive what, in the word of the truth of the gospel, he sincerely and urgently offers thee, sinner as thou art, a free forgiveness, a full salvation.

To all, then, whether saint or sinner, we proclaim as the only means of obtaining true composure of spirit, and permanent peace in this region where there is so much to terrify and trouble, "Sanctify the Lord in your heart; let him be your fear and dread, and he will be to you a sanctuary." Happy those who, by complying with the command, enter into peace. But oh! what will become of those who refuse this Divine call, who set at naught this Divine counsel? What will become of them "when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a fire that burneth; when distress and anguish come upon them?" *Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation. *Then* will be the time of reckoning; *then* will be the day of vengeance. Then there can be no peace to these wicked ones. Then will be at once the realization of their worst fears; and fears of greater evils still, the prospect of eternally accumulating misery. Sinner, "if thou

[1] Psal. cxvi. 3. Isa. xlv. 21. Rom. iii. 26. [2] Cowper. [3] Job xxii. 21.

be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." [1]

§ 3.—*Readiness at all times to give an answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.*

The third injunction given to Christians, as exposed to persecution, is, to "be always ready to give an answer, to every one who should ask them a reason of the hope that was in them, with meekness and fear."

The inspired injunction obviously takes for granted that Christians are distinguished by the possession of a peculiar hope—they have "a hope in them;" that this hope is not a groundless one—a reason can be given for it, it can be defended; that this hope ought not, and cannot be concealed; and that for this hope Christians may be, are likely to be, called on to give an account; and it calls on Christians, in these circumstances, to give an answer to every one that asks them a reason of their hope; in other words, to state and defend the grounds of their hope; to be always prepared to do this; and finally, to do this, whenever it is done, with meekness and fear. These are, as it were, the elementary parts into which the injunction naturally resolves itself, and I shall briefly direct your attention to them in their order.

Christians are distinguished by the possession of a peculiar hope. They have a hope in them. It is not the possession of hope generally, that distinguishes Christians from the rest of mankind; for it would not be easy to fix on any characteristic that more certainly belongs to the whole race, than the capacity and disposition to anticipate with desire and delight future good. Unbelieving men are indeed said to "have no hope," but it is the same way in which they are said to be "without God." [2] They have hopes many, as they have gods many; though strangers to the true God, and to the hope which maketh not ashamed. Human suffering would be often intolerable, were it not for the hope of deliverance. There is truth as well as beauty in the adage, "If it were not for hope, the heart would break;" and, even when happiest, it will be found that a very considerable portion of man's enjoyment arises, not from what he has, but from what he hopes for.

> "Hope springs eternal in the human breast,—
> Man never is, but always to be, blest." [3]

But as, while all men believe as well as the Christian, he has his peculiar belief, which distinguishes him from all other men; so, while all men hope, the Christian has his peculiar hope, which equally distinguishes him from all other men,—a hope of which he was once destitute, and of which he obtained possession, when, by the faith of the truth, he became a Christian in the only true and proper sense of that word." [4]

[1] Prov. ix. 12.
[2] Eph. ii. 12.
[3] Pope.
[4] Eph. i. 12, 13. Trusted; margin, hoped.

That hope, thus obtained, is variously described in the New Testament. It is termed, "the hope of salvation;" "the hope of eternal life;" "the hope of the glory of God;" "the hope of the righteousness," or justification, "by faith."[1] Each of these terms is full of meaning.

It is "the hope of salvation;" that is, deliverance from evil, both physical and moral, in all its forms and degrees, forever. It is "the hope of eternal life;" that is, not merely of immortal existence, but of an eternity of what constitutes the life of life, true happiness,—a happiness suited to all our various capacities of enjoyment, filling these capacities to an overflow; a happiness pervading the whole nature throughout unending duration.

It is "the hope of the glory of God." The glory of God in this expression seems equivalent to the approbation of God. Men have sinned and lost God's approbation. They are not, they cannot be, the objects of his approbation. They are the objects of his judicial displeasure, of his deep moral disapprobation. Little as sinful men think of it, this is the sum and substance of their misery; and the removal of this, and restoration to his favor, are at once absolutely necessary, and completely sufficient, to make them happy. The Christian's hope is a hope that he shall ultimately be just what God would have him to be, perfectly holy, perfectly happy, in intimate relation, in complete conformity, to God; that the eye of his Father in heaven shall yet rest on him with entire moral complacency, and his word pronounce him, as a part of his completed new creation, very good.

It is "the hope of the righteousness," or justification "by faith;" that is, not the hope of obtaining justification by faith, for justification by faith is, as it were, the fundamental blessing of Christianity, not a benefit to be conferred at some future period. It is something that the Christian possesses already. It is not one of the blessings of salvation of which the apostle speaks, when he says, "We are saved by hope;" that is, our salvation is yet future—ours, not in possession, though in sure prospect. The hope of the justification by faith, is the hope that grows out of justification by faith; the hope which only the justified by faith can cherish. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access to that grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."[2]

Such are some of the scriptural designations of this hope. Let us now inquire, a little more particularly, what are its objects?

The Christian is "confident that he who has begun the good work," in him, "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;" that he will "preserve him from every evil work, unto his heavenly kingdom;" that he will "make his grace sufficient for him;" that he will "strengthen him with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness;" that he will "supply all his need according to his glorious riches;" that he will "never leave him, never forsake him;" that he will make "all things work together for his good," and even his afflictions, however severe and long-continued, to "work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He hopes that "Christ

[1] 1 Thess. v. 8. Tit. iii. 7. Rom. v. 2. Gal. v. 5. [2] Rom. v. 1, 2.

will be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death." [1] And he has hope in death, hope after death. He hopes that, when his spirit becomes "absent from the body," it will become "present with the Lord;" being with him where he is, and, beholding and sharing his glory, mingling with "the innumerable company of angels, and with the spirits of the just made perfect;" being "before the throne of God, and serving him day and night in his temple; while he who sits on the throne dwells among them, and they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither does the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them to the fountains of living waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." [2] His "flesh also rests in hope." His hope is the hope of the resurrection to life; "the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." He looks for Him from heaven, "to change his vile body, and fashion it like unto His own glorious body." He hopes that "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality; that what is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; what is sown in dishonor, shall be raised in glory; what is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; what is sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body." He is looking for Him to come "the second time without sin for his salvation;" and his hope is, that "when He shall appear, he shall appear with Him in glory;" being "like Him, seeing Him as He is." He is hoping for this "manifestation of the sons of God;" this "adoption, the redemption of the body;" and his final hope is that, body and soul, "he shall forever be with the Lord." [3]

Such is the hope of the Christian with regard to himself; and he cherishes the same hope in reference to all his brethren in Christ. He hopes that Christ, who loved the church, will, after having purified her by the washing of water through the word, "present her to himself, as a bride adorned for her husband, a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." He hopes for a "gathering together" of all the faithful at the coming of the Lord; he hopes, that when the Lord descends from heaven, all the dead in Christ shall rise, all the living in Christ shall be changed, and that they shall "together be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," and shall "together be made perfect." [4]

The Christian, too, has characteristic hopes concerning the cause and kingdom of his Lord. He hopes for its ultimate triumph over all its opposers, all the powers of darkness, all the forms of evil, ignorance, error, superstition, fanaticism, idolatry, in all their endless diversities of false principles and depraved dispositions, which counter-work its benignant tendencies, and have hitherto rendered its progress so slow, and its influence so limited. He hopes for a period when the idols shall be utterly abolished, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord," when "the kingdoms of this world shall be-

[1] Phil. i. 6; iii. 19. Col. i. 11. Heb. xiii. 5. Rom. viii. 28. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

[2] 2 Cor. v. 6–8. John xvii. 24. Heb. xii. 22, 23. Rev. vii. 15–17.

[3] Psal. xvi. 9. Tit. ii. 13. Phil. iii. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 42–44, 53. Heb. ix. 28. 1 John iii. 2. Rom. viii. 19, 23. 1 Thess. iv. 17.

[4] Eph. v. 25–27. 2 Thess. ii. 1. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. Heb. xi. 40. Οὗτοι πάντες—μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν.

come the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," when "men shall be blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed."[1] Such is the Christian's hope.

And this hope is not groundless, no airy dream, no uncertain probability. It rests on the power, and wisdom, and faithfulness, and benignity of God, pledged in a plain, well-accredited revelation of his will. It has come to him by "the word of the truth of the gospel,"[2] to understand, and believe, and love which, his mind and heart have been opened by the effectual working of the Good Spirit. He has formed these expectations not in consequence of following cunningly devised fables, but in consequence of believing that word, which brought along with it powerful demonstration, that it was "not the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which worketh effectually in them believing it;"[3] tranquillizing the mind, pacifying the conscience, purifying the heart, transforming the character.[4] Thus he knows on whom he has believed, and in whom he hopes. His hope is in God. Jehovah is the hope of his people. They hope in his mercy: they hope in his word. "Our Lord Jesus himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace."[5]

These hopes dwell in the heart of the Christian. There seems emphasis in the expression, "The hope that is in you." It has not merely been "set before" you, it has been embraced by you. It is not a mere professed hope; it is a real hope, a living, not a dead hope.

But though it dwells in the heart, it does not, it should not, it cannot, remain concealed. From its very nature it must manifest itself both in words and in actions: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "Knowing," says the apostle, referring to one leading object of the christian hope, "that he who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you; we believe, and therefore speak." Christians cannot but speak of the things which they hope for; and "every one who hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure," whom they are hoping to see, and to whom they are hoping to be conformed when he appears.[6] No. Christian hope cannot be concealed. What fills the mind to an overflow, must become manifest. Even the Old Testament believers "declared plainly, that they were seeking a country, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."[7]

The profession of hope on the part of the Christian is, moreover, matter of positive obligation. It is expressly commanded. It is necessarily implied in the duty of confessing Christ, and is requisite to our performance of our highest duties to our fellow-men. "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope" (hope, not faith, is the genuine reading), says the apostle, "without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised;"[8] and he assures us that this is the proof of our belonging to "the house," the family of Christ, that "we hold fast the

[1] Isa. xi. 9. Rev. xi. 15. Psal. lxxii. 17. [2] Col. i. 5. [3] 1 Thess. ii. 13.

[4] "It is certain there is no hope, without some antecedent belief, that the thing hoped for may come to pass; and the strength and steadfastness of our hope is ever proportioned to the measure of our faith."—BENTLEY.

[5] 2 Thess. ii. 16. [6] 2 Cor. iv. 13, 14. 1 John iii. 3.

[7] Heb. xi. 13, 14. [8] Heb. x. 23.

confidence," that is, the free, fearless avowal of, "and the rejoicing of," the glory in, "the hope of the gospel, firm to the end."[1] The Christian acts very unworthily who behaves as if he was ashamed of his hope, ashamed of a hope which will never make ashamed any who really cherish it. The avowal of the Christian's hope is necessarily implied in that confession of the mouth, which the apostle represents as equally, with faith in the heart, requisite in order to salvation. A Christian cannot declare his faith without avowing his hope; and he cannot neglect the declaration of his faith without exposing himself to that tremendous denunciation: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father who is in heaven. He that is ashamed of me and of my words, before this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."[2]

It has been justly said, "To all who deliberately hold the truth captive, we are bound to declare that they do not possess the truth, or rather, that the truth does not possess them; does not dwell in them richly. Religious conviction, which refuses to express itself, is disowned by that very act."

Those doctrines which embody the Christian's hope are the saving truth. That every one who is in possession of that truth, should make it known to others, is the first duty which the second great commandment of the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," binds on the conscience. In presenting it to their belief, he must avow his own; and he cannot, as we have seen, avow his faith without professing his hope. "We are debtors of religious truth to our brethren," says one of the greatest writers of our age, "so soon as we ourselves become possessed of it;" "we are debtors in the strictest sense of the term, for, properly speaking, the truth is not the exclusive property of any one. Every good, which may be communicated by its possessor without impoverishing himself, cannot remain exclusively his own. If this proposition be not true, morality falls to the ground. How much more does this hold good of a blessing which is multiplied by division of a spring which becomes more abundant as it pours out its waters?"[3] The hope of the gospel is necessary to true comfort here, to perfect happiness hereafter. I am bound then to communicate, so far as man can do it, this hope to those who are destitute of it. How can I do this but by telling them what I hope for, and why I hope for it; showing them how that hope became mine, and how it may become theirs. For the Christian to keep his hope to himself, were it possible, would be to deny the bread of life to those who are perishing of hunger. Almost every denial may find some excuse but this. We are not bound to give bread to all men in all circumstances; but we do owe to all men, in all circumstances, the communication of saving truth.

Even though the Christian were disposed to conceal his hope, he would find it difficult to do so; for he is likely, as the apostle intimates, to be called to give an account of it: a reason of his hope is likely to be demanded of him. Such inquiries may originate in various and

[1] Heb. iii. 6. Τὴν παῤῥησίαν καὶ τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος. [2] Matt. x. 33. Luke xii. 8.
[3] Vinet.

opposite causes. Some, who are honestly inquiring after truth and happiness, having discovered that the hopes which the world offers to its votaries are liable to be disappointed, and even when realized cannot confer true permanent enjoyment, may ask a reason of the hope that is in the Christian, that they may see whether it meets the exigences of their case, and, if it does so, that they may find how they may become partakers of it; others may make such inquiries merely for the purpose of cavilling at, and casting ridicule on, the Christian and his hope; and others, armed with civil power, may call him in question for his hope and faith, and for his conduct as influenced by this hope and faith. In the primitive age, and in other ages too, the faith and hope of the gospel have often led their possessors to refuse compliance with what custom and law required, and to follow certain courses which custom and law condemned and proscribed; and Christians have, in consequence of this, often been "called before governors and kings, magistrates and powers," as their Lord forewarned them, to give an account of that hope which distinguished them from those among whom they lived, and of the grounds on which it rested. When the connection of the passage is carefully attended to, it can scarcely be doubted that it is to this last species of inquisition into the nature and ground of the Christian's hope, that the apostle directly refers.

Whatever may be the motives of the inquirers, it is the duty of the Christian, in ordinary circumstances, "to give an answer to every one who asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him." What the apostle calls on Christians to do, is to *defend* their hope to those who called on them to give an account of it, for that is the force of the word rendered *answer*;[1] apology, in the sense in which the word is used in reference to the apologies of the Fathers for Christianity, the publication of which was indeed just a specimen of obedience to the apostle's injunction,—a defence of the faith and hope of the gospel, by a statement of their grounds to those Roman magistrates who persecuted them. Every Christian, when called on to give an account of his hope, is to defend it. He is to do this, first, by distinctly stating what it is; by giving a plain account of what are the objects of his hope: and this of itself, if candidly listened to, will go far to answer all the purposes of defence. But he must do more than this: he must be ready to show that what he hopes for is really promised in the Scriptures, and that these Scriptures are indeed "given by inspiration of God"—an infallible and authoritative revelation of the Divine mind and will, for the regulation of the religious sentiments and conduct of mankind, and therefore, a solid foundation for his hope. He must show that his hope is no mere imagination, but is founded on the most certain truth; and that in performing the duties, making the sacrifices, cherishing the expectations, which naturally flow from its admission, he is acting a reasonable, the only reasonable part, and that to abandon his hope, or to do anything inconsistent with it, were to act the part of a fool and a madman. And the Christian is to do this, not only where it may be done without inconvenience or hazard, but in the face of the greatest dangers, though sure to draw down on

[1] Ἀπολογία.

himself ridicule, scorn, contumely, torture, death. "Consequences should be accounted for naught in the discharge of this duty, which is of an absolute nature; or, if considered at all, should be regarded only as motives and additional inducements to its fulfilment." [1]

There are, however, cases in which a formal defence of the Christian's hope, even when he is called in question for it, could serve no good purpose. The command of our Lord is not superseded by, for it is not inconsistent with, that of his apostle: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again to rend you." [2] It has been justly observed, "That the truth is not to be scattered at random like contemptible dust: it is a pearl which must not be exposed to be trodden under foot by the profane. To protect it by an expressive silence is sometimes the only way we can testify our own respect for it, or conciliate that of others. He who cannot be silent respecting it, under certain circumstances, does not sufficiently respect it. Silence is on some occasions the only homage truth expects from us. This silence has nothing in common with dissimulation; it involves no connivance with the enemies of truth; it has no other object than to protect it from needless outrage. This silence, in a majority of instances, is a language; and when, in the conduct of those who maintain it, everything is consistent with it, the truth loses nothing by being suppressed. Or to speak more correctly, it is not suppressed; it is vividly, though silently, pointed out; its dignity and importance are placed in relief; and the respect which occasioned this silence, itself imposes silence on the witnesses of its manifestation." [3] The greatest of all witnesses to the truth, who, in delivering his testimony, set his face as a flint, not fearing the cross, despising the shame, maintained, on some occasions, a dignified silence even when questioned; but it was only where the truth had already been declared by him, and when a renewed declaration of it could have served no good purpose. His object was not to shelter himself, but the truth, from unnecessary insults. Generally, his conduct corresponded with the prophetic oracle concerning him: "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." [4]

But though Christians may not be required in every case to give an answer, even when questioned, respecting their hope, they must always hold themselves "ready" to do so when called on. To be "ready," is to be prepared, when called on, to state and defend the christian hope. For this purpose, it is necessary that the Christian should be constantly giving all diligence towards maintaining the full assurance of hope in his own heart; that he should be familiarly acquainted with the objects of his hope, as these are stated in the Holy Scriptures; and with the manner, too, in which those things, which it would seem, at first sight, to be folly and presumption in man to hope for, have become the object, the reasonable object, of his hope, and may become the reasonable object of the hope of every man who, like him,

[1] Vinet. [2] Matt. vii. 6. [3] Vinet. [4] Psal. xl. 9, 10.

believes in Jesus. He must be able to show how he once cherished false hopes; and how he was made ashamed of these hopes; and how he was, when destitute of all hope, led, in the faith of the truth of the gospel, to lay hold on the hope there set before him. He must be able to show, how the free grace of God, manifested in a consistency with his righteousness, through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, when apprehended in the statements and promises of the gospel, lays a solid foundation for all the great and glorious expectations which he entertains. And as such a statement can be satisfactory only on the supposition that the Bible is indeed a Divine Revelation, he must be prepared to show, that in giving credit to its declarations, and grounding his hope on them, he has acted a reasonable part; because it is indeed given by the inspiration of that God who cannot lie, who cannot be deceived, and who cannot deceive.

The importance of an accurate and extensive knowledge of the evidence of Christianity can scarcely be overrated, if it be not substituted in the place of an experimental knowledge of Christianity itself. It is of vital importance to the individual Christian's peace and improvement. It is intimately connected with the vigor of his graces and the abundance of his consolations. I do not say that a man is not a Christian who cannot give a distinct account of the evidence of the divinity of the religion which he professes to believe; but in proportion to the imperfection and indistinctness of his views on this subject, will be the deficiency and insecurity of his attainments, both in holiness and in comfort. These are weighty words of Richard Baxter: "I take it to be the greatest cause of coldness in duty, weakness in grace, boldness in sinning, and unwillingness to die, that our faith in the Divine authority of the Scriptures is either unsound or infirm. Few Christians among us have anything better than an implicit faith on this point. They have received it by tradition. Godly ministers and Christians tell them so: it is impious to doubt it, and therefore they believe it. And this worm, lying at the root, causeth the languishing and decaying of the whole. Faith in the verity of the Scriptures, would be an exceeding help to the joy of the saints. For myself," adds that wonderful man, "if my faith in this point had no imperfection, if I did as verily believe the glory to come as I do believe that the sun will rise again when it is set, oh, how would it raise my desires and my joys! What haste would I make! How serious should I be! How should I trample on these earthly vanities, and even forget the things below! How restless should I be till I was assured of the heavenly rest; and then how restless till I did possess it! How should I delight in the thoughts of death, and my heart leap at the tidings of his approach!"

If such a knowledge of the evidences of revelation be of importance to the healthy state of the christian life generally, it is absolutely necessary to the discharge of that particular function of it of which we are speaking. How can a Christian, with very limited and confused ideas on this subject, give a reason for his hope, or defend it? It is, then, of great importance that Christians should not satisfy themselves with any confidence or persuasion unless they have such clear

and rational grounds thereof, as do not only convince themselves, but admit of being stated in a distinct manner to others.

If we would "be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us," we must attend to the wise man's declaration, "The heart of the wise *studieth* to answer."[1] We must give ourselves to reading, we must meditate on these things, and thus lay up in store what we may turn to account when called on to state and defend our hope. To be ready for the discharge of this duty, we must farther habitually seek and cherish the influence of the Good Spirit, who is the author of faith and hope; who takes the things of Christ and shows them to us; who brings truth seasonably to remembrance; and who was "a mouth and wisdom" to the primitive Christians, when called to state and defend their hope. He who has his mind full of truth and its evidence, and his heart filled with humble, confiding dependence on the teaching and guidance of the Good Spirit; he whose habitual prayer is, "Uphold me according to thy word, and let me not be ashamed of my hope;"[2] he, he alone, is "always ready" to discharge the duty here enjoined in a manner creditable to his religion, calculated to convince the candid, and to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Such a man, if called to it, will "speak of God's testimonies before kings, and not be ashamed."[3]

It only remains that a word or two be said respecting the manner in which this duty to our religion and its Author, and to our fellow-men, is to be performed. Christians are to "give an answer to those who ask them a reason of the faith that is in them with "meekness and fear."

The truth is to be stated and defended in its own spirit—the spirit, not only of power, but of love; not only of a sound mind, but of a tender heart. The conduct of those who call them to give an account of their faith may be, often has been, most unreasonable and provoking. But the christian confessor must possess his soul in patience. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves," "showing all meekness to all men."[4] "He must not bluster and fly into invectives, because he has the better of it, against any man who questions him of his hope, as some think themselves authorized to use rough speech because they plead for truth. On the contrary, so much the rather should he study meekness for the glory and advantage of the truth. It needs not the service of passion; yea, nothing so disserves it as passion when set to serve it. The spirit of truth is withal the spirit of meekness—the dove that rested on that great champion of truth, who is truth itself; and this spirit is from him derived to the lovers of truth, and they ought to seek a participation of it. Imprudence, want of meekness, rashness, harshness, makes some kind of Christians lose much of their labor in speaking for religion, and drives those farther off whom they would draw into it."[5]

The pleader for religion cannot be too earnest; but it must be the earnestness of conviction as to the truth, the earnestness of compassion to those who oppose it. As an able writer says, "His voice may well falter from emotion; but it must not be the emotion of anger.

[1] Prov. xv. 28. [2] Psal. cxix. 116. [3] Psal. cxix. 46.
[4] 2 Tim. ii. 25. Tit. iii. 2. [5] Leighton.

Energy may give emphasis to his words, and cause them to vibrate, but passion never." [1]

This duty is to be performed, not only with meekness, but "with fear;" that is, not as some have supposed, with due respect to the heathen magistrates before whom Christians were called to defend their hope; but with religious reverence, with holy fear, with a sense of the infinite importance of the subject, and its close connection with the eternal interests both of those who question and of him who answers. "Divine things ought never to be spoken in a light, perfunctory way, but with a reverend, grave temper of spirit; and for this reason some choice should be made (when we have it in our power) of time and persons. The confidence that is in this hope makes the believer not fear men to whom he answers; but still he fears God, for whom he answers; and whose interest is chief in the things he speaks of. The soul that has the deepest sense of spiritual things, and knowledge of God, is most afraid to miscarry in speaking of him; most tender and wary how to acquit itself when engaged to speak of and for God." [2] There is something very shocking in an irreverent defence of the solemn verities of the christian revelation. It almost necessarily induces a suspicion of the depth, if not of the reality, of the conviction of the apologist. The man who regards as real the glorious objects of the christian hope, must be filled with a heartfelt joy and a solemn awe, both equally incompatible with every approach to irreverence. He will rejoice, but he will "rejoice with trembling."

Thus have I endeavored briefly to illustrate this interesting passage. Of the mode of conduct which it recommends, we have a fine specimen in the conduct of the apostles Peter and John before the Jewish Sanhedrim, as recorded in the fourth chapter of the acts of the Apostles, and of the Apostle Paul in defence of himself before Festus and King Agrippa. What clear statements, what powerful reasons, what a readiness in giving them, what meekness, what fear, characterize their speeches! How well fitted were they to compel respect both for the cause and its advocates, even from the most prejudiced judges!

I cannot conclude this part of the discourse without calling on all my hearers seriously to examine whether they have any hope in them in reference to eternity; and whether the hope they have in them be the hope of the gospel. There are not a few who have no hope with regard to eternity. They have no faith, no solid belief, on such subjects, and therefore they can have no hope. Others have a kind of faith as to eternity, of which they would very willingly get rid; but it is a faith which produces, not the hope which gives peace, but the fear that has torment. Others have hope, it may be strong hope; but they can give no satisfactory reason for their hope. It rests on no solid basis, but on false views of God and of themselves. If you have no hope for eternity, be assured you have not believed the gospel; and if your hope rests on anything but the free grace of God, manifested in consistency with his justice in the atonement of Christ, apprehended by you in the faith of the truth of the gospel, be assured that that hope will fail you in the day of trial, and make you "ashamed and confounded, world without end."

[1] Vinet. [2] Leighton.

How sad is it to think that so many are without hope, so many without good hope; while there is hope, good hope, set before every sinner to whom the gospel comes! "This is a faithful saying, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. He came to save sinners, even the chief. He is able to save to the uttermost all coming to God by him. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." This is the very truth most sure. This great salvation was spoken to us by the Son of God, and has been confirmed to us by them who heard him; and God has given witness to it by divers signs, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will, and especially by raising Christ from the dead, and giving him glory, that our faith and hope might be in him.[1]

Let those who, through the faith of this truth, have hope, good hope, in them, prove its reality by purifying themselves as he in whom they hope is pure; and let them seek to grow in hope that they may grow in holiness; and seek to grow in holiness that they may grow in hope; and seek to grow in faith that they may grow both in hope and holiness. Let them "show all diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end; that they be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises." Let them prove themselves to be the family of Christ, by "holding fast the confidence and rejoicing of their hope steadfast to the end." Let them hold forth the word of life, the ground of their hope, in a meek and reverent confession of the truth, and attest and adorn that confession by "a conversation becoming the gospel"—a holy, happy, useful life. Let them "not cast away their confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Let them persevere in faith and hope and holiness; that, "after having done the will of God, they may receive the promise."[2]

It is but a little while, and faith shall be converted into vision, hope into enjoyment; that which is in part shall pass away, and that which is perfect shall take its place. They who are "looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of him who is the Great God and our Saviour," shall not look in vain. "He that should come will come, and will not tarry." Meanwhile let us live by faith; let us persevere in the belief, and profession, and practice of the truth: knowing that, "if any man turn back, God's soul has no pleasure in him." Oh, may all of us, who profess to have the faith and hope of the gospel in us, be found at last, not among "those who draw back unto perdition, but among those who believe to the saving of the soul."[3]

§ 4.—*Maintaining "a good conscience" and "a good conversation."*

It only remains to consider the last injunction laid on Christians as exposed to persecution. They are exhorted to "have a good conscience; that, whereas they spoke evil of them, as of evil-doers, they might be ashamed who falsely accused their good conversation in Christ." In the remaining part of the discourse, I shall, first, inquire

[1] 1 Tim. i. 15. 2 Cor. v. 19. 1 John i. 7. Heb. vii. 25. John iii. 16. Heb. ii. 4. 1 Pet. i. 21.

[2] Heb. vi. 11, 12; iii. 6; x. 35, 36.

[3] Heb. x. 37–39.

what the apostle calls on the calumniated Christians to do; and, second, why he requires them to do this. He requires them to do two things: the one in express terms; the other by necessary implication. He requires them to "have," or hold, "a good conscience," and to maintain "a good conversation," in Christ; and he requires them to do this, that their calumniators may be made ashamed of their false accusations.

In considering the first part of our subject, I shall, in succession, endeavor to explain to you what it is to have a good conscience, and what it is to maintain a good conversation, in Christ, and then show how these are mutually connected; how they act and react on each other.

There are few subjects on which more has been written and spoken to little, or no, or worse than no, purpose, than conscience. "Here," as Leighton justly says, "are many fruitless, verbal debates; and, as in other things that most require solid and useful consideration, the vain mind of man feedeth on the wind, and loves to be busy to no purpose. How much better is it to have the good conscience than dispute about its nature; to experience its power than to understand its definition." Yet it is very desirable that we should have distinct and accurate ideas on this subject. If we do not know what conscience is, how can we understand what is meant by a good conscience? and if we do not know what a good conscience is, how can we employ the appropriate means of obtaining it if we are destitute of it, or of retaining it if we are so happy as already to possess it?

Conscience may be described as that part of our mental constitution which makes us the proper subjects of religious and moral obligation and responsibility; or, in other words, the human mind in its relations to God and duty. It is a part of the constitution of man, that as he makes, and cannot but make, a distinction between propositions as true and false, so he makes, and cannot but make, a distinction between dispositions and actions as right and wrong; and as he cannot but count what he thinks to be true to be worthy of belief, and what he thinks to be false to be worthy of disbelief; so he cannot but count what he thinks right worthy of approbation and reward, and what he thinks wrong worthy of disapprobation and punishment; and he cannot do what he knows to be right without the pleasurable feeling of self-approbation, nor can he do what he knows to be wrong without the painful feeling of self-disapprobation. These seem to be the acts or states of the mind to which we give the general name of conscience. It is, as the apostle expresses it, the having "the work," the office[1] of law so "written in the heart," so inwoven into his nature, as that without a written law he is as a law to himself, his thoughts accusing or excusing one another. It seems to be this part of our constitution to which Solomon refers, when he says, that "the spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." It is this peculiar endowment of the human soul more than anything else, more than all things else taken together, that raises it above the animating principle of the brutes.[2]

[1] Τὰ τοῦ νόμου. Τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου.—Rom. ii. 14, 15.

[2] See Bishop Butler's "Three Sermons on Human Nature"—the most valuable treatise on the philosophy of morals in existence.

The conscience is good when the mind exercises all the functions referred to, in a way fitted to promote the religious and moral excellence, the holiness and the happiness, both of the individual and of all with whom he is connected. It is absolutely good when it gains this end in the highest degree; and it is good or evil just in the degree in which it gains these ends, or comes short of them, or conduces to ends of an opposite kind.

Man, when he came from the hand of his Creator, was as a being possessed of conscience, as, in every other view that can be taken of his nature, very good. He had a good conscience. He clearly perceived what was right, and strongly felt what was good. He thought, and felt, and acted, in entire coincidence with his convictions of right. His heart condemned him not, and he had confidence towards God, arising from the consciousness that, in mind and heart, he was entirely conformed to His will.

Had this state of things continued, sin and misery had never been known; and in a growing acquaintance with what is holy, just, and good, and a corresponding disposition to conform himself in all the faculties of his nature to it, a foundation was laid for illimitable progress in moral excellence and happiness.

But man's conscience became evil, and "that which was ordained to life became death," the fruitful source both of sin and of misery. The conscience, under malignant spiritual influence, became evil, morally depraved, hesitating in a case where there was no room for hesitation; doubting as to the absolute authority of a distinctly uttered announcement of the mind of God, and as to the necessary connection between sin and punishment. Had conscience maintained its superiority over desire, Satan might have tempted, but man would not have fallen. But conscience betrayed its trust, and delivered man up to the influence of curiosity and ambition, inflamed by the false representations of the great deceiver; and no sooner had he, yielding to temptation, violated the Divine law, than, incapable of changing its nature, the inward witness and judge instantly became evil, in the sense of being productive of misery. It having first deceived him, then slew him. It repeated the declaration of the Lawgiver in a most terrific form: "Thou hast eaten, thou must die: thou art a sinner, thou art miserable." It filled him with remorse and the fear which has torment; and made him flee from what had been the source of his happiness, but now was the object of his terror, "the presence of the Lord." [1]

Man, the sinner, is exposed, under the penal arrangements of the Divine government, to the operation of causes both of depravity and of wretchedness without himself; but the principal sources both of his ever-growing sin and misery are within himself, in his own de-

[1] Prima est hæc ultio, quod se
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur.
Cur tamen hos tu
Evasisse putes, quos diri conscia facti
Mens habet attonitos est surdo verbere cædit
Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?
Pœna autem vehemens, ac multo sævior illis
Quas et Cædilius gravis invenit, aut Rhadamanthus,
Nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.—JUVENAL, xiii.

praved nature. He is his own perverter and his own tormentor. All the faculties of his nature have become "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin;" and they all, too, "bring forth fruit unto death." All his faculties, originally good, are now evil: evil—influenced by depravity; evil—productive of misery. Conscience, the master faculty, is thus emphatically evil.

Conscience, influenced by ignorance, and error, and criminal inclination, pronounces false judgments, calls evil good, and good evil, and says peace, peace, where there is no peace. It approves what it should condemn, and condemns what it should approve. It is fitful, and uncertain, and inconsistent, and unreasonable, sometimes, at the same time it may be reproving and punishing severely for the neglect of some superstitious usage, and permitting, or even enjoining, the perpetration of the greatest crimes. It is sometimes absurdly and most vexatiously sensitive and scrupulous, and at other times "seared as with a hot iron." This is the very core of man's depravity and wretchedness. When the mind and the conscience are defiled, nothing can be pure. When the light which is in man is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Even when conscience, in the unchanged, unpardoned sinner, performs its most legitimate function, *condemnation*, it is *evil*, productive of depravity as well as of misery. Its condemnation irritates, instead of destroying, or even weakening, the sinful principle which is condemned. It awakens, into more exasperated fury, enmity against Him who forbids, and who punishes, what the sinner loves. It makes the sinner "run, as it were, on the Almighty's neck, on the thick bosses of his buckler;" or, paralyzing the sinews of dutiful exertion, makes him say there is no hope, and yield himself up an unresisting victim to the powers of evil. And the most fearful scenes of suffering that are witnessed on this side death—out of the prison-house from which there is no discharge, are those which originate in the inflictions of a guilty, awakened, unenlightened conscience. This is the most adequate representation we can have of "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that cannot be quenched."

Behold a picture drawn from the life of a sinner conscience-struck:—

"Alas! how changed! Expressive of his mind,
His eyes are sunk, arms folded, head reclined.
Those awful syllables—hell, death, and sin!
Though whisper'd, plainly tell what works within:
That conscience there performs her proper part,
And writes a doomsday sentence on his heart.
Forsaking and forsaken of all friends,
He now perceives where earthly pleasure ends.
Hard task for one who lately knew no care;
And harder still, as learned beneath despair!
His hours no longer pass unmark'd away—
A dark importance saddens every day:
He hears the notice of the clock, perplexed,
And cries—Eternity perhaps comes next!
Sweet music is no longer music here,
And laughter sounds like madness in his ear;
His grief the world of all her powers disarms—
Wine has no taste, and beauty has no charms."[1]

[1] Cowper.

Out of this darkness God can bring light; but its natural consummation is "the blackness of darkness forever."

The question is a most important one, How is conscience in man, the sinner, to become good, the source of holiness and happiness, a well of living water in him, springing up unto everlasting life? The true answer is, the conscience must be brought under the saving operation of "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." It must be sprinkled by the blood of his atoning sacrifice: it must be enlightened by his word: it must be influenced by his Spirit. It is thus, thus alone, that any sinner can have a good conscience.

"The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."[1] The heart is thus "sprinkled from an evil conscience." The evil conscience becomes good. The sprinkling of the blood of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the conscience of the sinner, makes it clean, "good;" converts it from a source of misery and sin into a source of peace and of holiness. But what is meant by this sprinkling of the blood of Christ on the heart or conscience, and how does it produce such wonderful, such delightful results? The best way of answering the first of these interesting questions is, perhaps, by asking another. The sprinkling of the blood of the sin-offering was necessary, in order to its being effectual to the removal of the guilt of those for whom it was offered. What, in the christian economy of redemption, answers to this part of "the patterns of the heavenly things?"[2] There can be but one reply: the faith of the truth respecting the atoning sacrifice of Christ, produced by the Holy Spirit. It is this which brings home the saving results of the atonement to the individual sinner.

Now, how does this faith of the truth respecting Christ, as the great atonement, deliver from the evil conscience, and bring us under the power of a good conscience? Till this truth is understood and believed, conscience condemns, cannot but condemn, the sinner, and produce in his mind and heart the natural consequences of this condemnation, fear and dislike of God. But when, in the faith of the truth, conscience sees God setting forth his Son, a propitiation in his blood, and hears him declaring that he is the Lamb of God, who has borne and borne away the sin of the world; who, though he knew no sin, has been made sin for men, wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities; and who thus has magnified the law and made it honorable, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; and that He, the righteous Judge, is well pleased for that righteousness' sake, and while the just God is the Saviour, "just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;" conscience, seeing and hearing all this, and echoing, as formerly, the voice of God, proclaims, "It is finished;" God is satisfied, and so am I; he justifies, and I absolve: "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."[3] Believing in him, thou art justified in all things, accepted in the Beloved. Thy sin is more condemned than ever through his flesh; but thou, thou art justified. Who shall lay anything to thy charge? God justifies;

[1] Heb. ix. 14. [2] Heb. ix. 23. Ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐπουρανίων. [3] Rom. viii. 1.

who shall condemn? Christ has died, the just in the room of the unjust."

And as the condemning conscience naturally filled the mind with dislike and fear of God; so the absolving, the justifying conscience casts out the jealousies of unforgiven guilt, fills the heart with confidence and love, fitting the man to yield a living service to the living God. In this way, in this way alone, can the conscience of man be made good, or kept good, by bringing it and keeping it under the pacifying, purifying power of the blood of atonement.

This is indeed "a good conscience." It makes its possessor at once happy and holy. Let him, who has heard its testimony, tell how it does so—

> "'Tis Heaven, all Heaven, descending on the wings
> Of the glad legions of the King of kings;
> 'Tis more—'tis God, diffused in every part,
> 'Tis God himself, triumphant in the heart."

The conscience that is thus sprinkled by Christ's blood is enlightened by Christ's truth. The Christian is "not unwise, but understands what the will of the Lord is." His conscience is not a blind impulse. Regulating him, it is itself regulated by "the perfect law of liberty," "the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of the Lord." It is not guided in its decisions by his own caprice, or his own reason, or the opinions of other men; but by "what is good, by what the Lord hath required."

And while sprinkled by the blood of Christ's sacrifice, and enlightened by the truth of Christ's law, it is guided in its operation by the influence of Christ's Spirit. He enables it wisely and honestly to make the precepts and motives of the christian law bear on the varying circumstances of the Christian's inner and outer life; on his transactions with God, and his transactions with men. A conscience which allows its possessor no quiet of mind, while known duty is neglected, or known sin is indulged; and makes him habitually feel the need of repairing to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleaness; and at once inclines and enables him to "walk at liberty," while he keeps God's law, and to "serve God without fear, in righteousness and holiness, all the days of his life,"[2] is the good conscience, to possess which is one of the Christian's highest privileges, and to maintain and improve which is one of his principal duties.

It is but right, however, before closing this part of the subject, to remark, that the phrase "a good conscience" is sometimes used in the New Testament in a more restricted sense, to signify that state of the mind when the conscience bears witness, "in the Holy Ghost," to the individual, that his conduct in any particular case is in accordance with what he knows and believes to be the will of God: an approving conscience. To this the apostle refers when he says, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world;" and again, "Herein do I

[1] Cowper. [2] Psal. cxix. 44, 45. Luke i. 74, 75.

exercise myself to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man;" and again, "Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly."[1] The question whether the apostle here uses the phrase in its more extended or more restricted sense, will meet us before we close the discourse.

Having thus illustrated the apostle's express injunction, to have a good conscience, I must pass more lightly over his implied one, to maintain a good conversation in Christ. The word "conversation" here, as uniformly in its biblical sense, does not mean, as in common usage, colloquial intercourse, but character and conduct, disposition and behavior. Conversation in Christ, is christian character and conduct; though, when the phrase "in Christ" is used, as it very often is in this way, as equivalent to an adjective, it has a great deal more meaning than we commonly attach to the word Christian. A conversation in Christ, is such a frame of disposition and tenor of conduct, as becomes persons who are placed in a relation so close to Jesus Christ, that all the most intimate unions known among men are employed to shadow forth its closeness. They are in him as the branches are in the vine, and the members in the body; they are so in him as that they died, and were buried, and rose again, in his death, burial, and resurrection; so one with him as that what he did was considered as done by them, and what he deserved is bestowed on them; so one with him as that his Father is their Father, his God their God, and his inheritance their inheritance; they are animated by his Spirit, having the same mind in them as was in him; thinking as he did, willing as he did, feeling as he did, choosing as he did; they acknowledge him as their one Teacher, Saviour, and Lord; they are "under law," in religious matters, to him, to him alone; they are "in the world as he was in the world," his animated images, his "living epistles, seen and read of all men." Such a character and conduct must have in them something very peculiar.

There are men, calling themselves Christians, and who would not be very well pleased with any one who questioned their right to that appellation, who think, feel, and act just as if there never had been such a person as Jesus Christ, and whose life is anything rather than "a life by the faith of the Son of God." Their conversation is not in Christ; his sacrifice is not the ground of their hope; his Spirit not the source of light, and life, and energy, and peace, and joy to them; his law is not the rule of their duty; his example not the pattern of their imitation; his authority and grace not their motives to duty; his glory not the end of their conduct. In a word, their conversation is not "such as becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ."

The maintenance of such "a conversation in Christ," ought to be a main object with every Christian. He must habitually endeavor to comply with the exhortation of Leighton, "Seek this as the only way to have thy soul and thy ways righted: to be in Christ, and then to walk in him. Let thy conversation be in Christ. Study him, and follow him. Look on his way, in his graces, his obedience, humility, and meekness, till, looking on them, they make the very

[1] 2 Cor. i. 12. Acts xxiv. 16. Heb. xiii. 18.

idea of thee new, as the painter doth of a face he would draw to the life. So behold his glory that thou mayest be transformed from glory to glory; but, as it is there added, this must be 'by the Spirit of the Lord.' Do not, therefore, simply look on him as an example without thee, but a life within thee. Having received him, walk not only like him, but in him. Let your conversation be not only according to him, but in him;" animated by his Spirit as well as regulated by his law.

Such a christian conversation will, of necessity, be "a good conversation." It is to "walk as He also walked;" the "holy, harmless" one; "separated from sinners;" "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" "who went about doing good."[1] A conversation in Christ must, just because it is conversation in Christ, include in it every species, every degree, of excellence.

The apostle had obviously a particular purpose to serve, in giving this epithet to the christian conversation which he intimates is expected from those to whom he wrote. It suggests the thought, 'If you Christians were characterized by an evil conversation, then not they who speak of you as evil-doers, but you, would have cause to be ashamed; but if your conversation be the good conversation, which it must be if it be a conversation in Christ, then the reality in your character and conduct will so strikingly, so grotesquely, contrast with their calumnious misrepresentations, they will be so plainly in the wrong, that they must be shamed into silence.'

The mutual relation of the apostle's two injunctions, the one express, relating to a good conscience; and the other implied, relating to a good conversation, requires now to be attended to. The relation is different, according as you consider the good conscience as bearing the wide, or the more limited, sense in which I explained the phrase in the preceding part of the discourse.

If you understand it in the wide sense, then the good conversation is the result of the good conscience; and the exhortation is, 'Hold a good conscience that you may maintain a good conversation in Christ.' Seek to have your conscience habitually sprinkled by Christ's blood, enlightened by Christ's truth, influenced by Christ's Spirit, that you may exemplify all the graces of the christian character, and perform all the duties of the christian life. In this view, the words embody one of the most important maxims of practical religion.

If, on the other hand, you understand having or holding a good conscience, to mean, seeking to maintain the approving smile of our own mind in a consistency with the truth of the case, then the good conscience is the result of the good conversation, and the exhortation is, 'Let your temper and behavior as Christians be habitually such, as that, whatever calumniators may say, you shall have the approving testimony of "the man within the breast;" that you shall have "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men."' This is another important maxim of practical religion.

The conversation cannot be made good but by having the conscience made good. The conscience cannot be kept good but by the

[1] 1 John ii. 6. Heb. vii. 26. 1 Pet. ii. 22. Acts x. 38.

conversation being kept good. To attempt, as some do, to get the conversation good, while the conscience is not good, is "to be still putting the handle of the clock right with your finger, which is a continual business, and does no good." [1] And to try, as others do, while not maintaining a good conversation, to keep a good opinion of themselves, and think this the testimony of a good conscience, by cherishing antinomian dogmas, mystical dreams, or enthusiastic raptures, is like a person attempting, by the use of narcotic medicines, to preserve peace of mind, when, through indolence and mismanagement, his affairs are in disorder, and ruin is at hand, and poverty about to come on him as an armed man.

The particular object for which the apostle addresses these injunctions to the persecuted Christians, comes now shortly to be noticed. Have a good conscience and a good conversation in Christ, "that they who speak evil of you as evil-doers, and accuse you, may be ashamed."

Christians cannot gratify their calumniators more than by being induced, under the irritating influence of their false accusations, to do anything inconsistent with a good conversation in Christ, which would, of course, interfere with the testimony of a good conscience. Even the slightest deviation of a Christian, not only from what is right in the estimation of a lax worldly morality, but from what is right according to the principles of spiritual Christianity, gives countenance to the slanders, and enables their authors to say, 'You see he is not what his profession requires him to be, and he only needs to be better known to be found out to be, indeed, the very bad person we represent him.'

On the other hand, uniform, consistent, good conduct, as it is often the only, so it is always, in the long run, the most effectual method of putting down calumny, and putting to shame calumniators. "A lying tongue is but for a moment." [2] Men cannot continue to believe without evidence, and in opposition to evidence. A uniform course of christian behavior secures, that, if the accusations are taken up and inquired into, they will be found not true. They will be found to be not even plausible; they will be found to be false, entirely false, obviously, malignantly false. Such was the result in the case of our Lord, when the attempt was made to substantiate the calumnies of his enemies. "I find no fault in him," said a judge certainly by no means predisposed in his favor. And such, too, was the result in the case of Paul, when he was spoken evil of as an evil-doer, and falsely accused. Claudius Lysias, the Roman commander, after inquiry, declared that, notwithstanding all the calumnies of his enemies, he had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds; and Festus the governor, and King Agrippa, came to the same conclusion; thus covering his calumniators with shame. Even where no formal investigation of calumnies takes place, a blameless holy life effectually refutes them.

When our hope is called in question, in all ordinary cases we should defend it; but defend it with meekness and fear. Silence in such a case is often, is usually, injustice to truth. But when our character is calumniated, in very many instances it is the wisest

[1] Leighton. [2] Prov. xii. 19.

course to allow it to vindicate itself. In such a case, to use Archbishop Leighton's beautiful figure, "The integrity of a Christian conquers, as a rock unremoved breaks the waters that are dashing against it. This is not only a lawful, but a laudable way of revenge; shaming calumny out of its malignant lies; punishing evil-speakers by well-doing; showing by facts, not words, how false is the accusation brought aginst us." This is the most effectual apology, the most triumphant refutation. It is like the reply which was given to the sophist, who denied the possibility of motion, and fortified his denial by many very ingenious reasons. His antagonist, without speaking a word, rose and walked. The most elaborate refutation would not more satisfactorily have exposed the absurdity, or so effectually have put the sophist to shame.

It is also a very weighty consideration, that without this good conscience and conversation, any defence we can make of our religion is not likely to have much influence. One unchristian action on the part of a professor of Christianity, will cast more discredit on his religion than the largest and best-framed speeches in its behalf can compensate. Religion has never permanently suffered from calumnies cast on consistently religious men; and the objects of such calumnies have seldom been permanent sufferers. When they "trust in the Lord and do good," when they "delight themselves in him," and "commit their way to him," he often, in a manner that amazes themselves and confounds their enemies, "brings forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day."[1]

The apostle closes his exhortations to Christians under persecution, by directing their attention to a view of affliction, calculated at once to afford support and direction, consolation and guidance: "For it is better, if the will of God be so," or since it is the will of the Lord, "that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing;" literally, "that ye suffer as well-doers rather than evil-doers."[2]

These words do not seem to have any peculiarly close connection with the verse which immediately precedes them. They are connected with the whole paragraph, occupied, as it is, with an account of the duties of Christians exposed to persecution. The force of the connective particle seems to be, 'You ought to submit to suffering, and you ought to act in this manner under suffering; "for it is better, since such is the will of God, to suffer; and it is better to suffer doing well, than doing evil."'

It is better, since such is the will of God, that Christians should suffer. Suffering is not in itself desirable. Abstractly considered, it is not better to suffer than not to suffer. But, taking into consideration the whole circumstances of the case, it is much better that Christians should suffer than that they should not suffer. "It is needful" that they be "in heaviness through manifold trials."[3] A life of ease would not be the suitable means of forming them to that character which is essential to their complete and final happiness. They all

[1] Psal. xxxvii. 3–6.
[2] Κρεῖττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιοῦντας (εἰ θέλει τὸ θέλημα Θεοῦ) πάσχειν, ἢ κακοποιοῦντας.
[3] 1 Pet. i. 6.

are made to see this in a good measure: and to say, "It has been good for me that I have been afflicted. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."[1] The occurrence of the affliction is proof enough that it is the "will of the Lord." "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"[2] Every affliction "comes forth from Him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." And the undoubted fact, that these sufferings are the will of God, is to Christians undoubted evidence that it is better for them to suffer. For, does not God love them? is he not infinitely wise? has he not promised to give them what is good, and to make all things work together for their good? Whatever, then, may be the form, whatever the degree, whatever the continuance of the affliction, there can be no reasonable doubt that this is the will of God concerning us; and as little doubt that that will is good. Nature may, nature often does, say, 'It were better that I did not suffer;' but faith reproves nature, and bids reason school her into a better mind. 'It is the will of the Lord that I suffer; that I suffer thus; and can anything be better, better for me, than the will of my Father in heaven, my Almighty, all-wise, infinitely righteous, infinitely benignant, unchanging Friend?'

There is to every rational being a strong argument for submission under affliction, in the sentiment, 'Such is the will of God.' For "what is, what can be, gained by our reluctances and repinings, but pain to ourselves? he doth what he wills, whether we consent or no. Our disagreeing doth not prejudice his purpose, but our peace. If we will not be led, we must be drawn; we must suffer if he will: but if we will what he wills, even in suffering that makes it sweet and easy when our mind goes along with his, and we willingly move with the stream of Providence, which will carry us with it, though we row against it, and we still have nothing but toil and weariness for our pains: and why should we not will what he wills, when we know this is his will, even our sanctification, our salvation; and that when he wills our sufferings, he wills them in order to these?"[3]

But the words before us not only intimate that it is better, since such is the will of God, that Christians suffer, but it is better that they suffer doing well, than doing evil. The sentiment which our translation brings out of the words is a just one, "it is better to suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing." 'Take heed,' as if he had said, 'that your enemies never have occasion to punish you for real crimes;' "let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters"—that would be disgraceful to yourselves, disgraceful to your cause; but if any man suffer as a Christian, for righteousness' sake, because he will not deny his Lord, or renounce his faith, "let him not be ashamed." It is far better to suffer in this last way than in the first way. Your characters will be improved, your religion will be honored, by such sufferings. The other sort of suffering is calculated to disgrace both.

At the same time, the words do seem naturally to express a somewhat different, and an equally important and appropriate sentiment. It is better to suffer the trials to which, as Christians, you are exposed,

[1] Psal. cxix. 71, 75. [2] Amos iii. 6. [3] Leighton.

doing well than doing evil. It is better to bear them in a right spirit than in a wrong spirit; to act properly under them than to act improperly. It is better, for example, that you should for injury and insult render blessing, than that you should resentfully retaliate; better that you should entirely rise above the fears of your adversary, than in any degree sink under them; better that you should meekly and piously meet the demands of your enemies for an account of your faith, than manifest either cowardice in shrinking from, or bad temper in conducting, your defence; better quietly live down the calumnies of your enemies, than be hurried by resentment of them into anything inconsistent with the holding a good conscience, or maintaining a good conversation. It is not enough that Christians, when they suffer, should suffer not for doing ill, but for doing well; but farther, that they should do well, and not do ill, in suffering. They should be good sufferers in a good cause. It is not the mere suffering that is to do us good; it is the manner in which we think, and feel, and act under suffering. It is much better, when called to suffer in the manner the apostle recommends, than in an opposite way. How much more comfortable, how much more advantageous to ourselves, how much more honorable to God, how much more creditable to religion, to bear the afflictions laid on us, especially those which come in the form of persecution, in a quiet, resigned, pious, cheerful, humble, patient, meek spirit, than in a different, than in an opposite temper! "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him, in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Then will "tribulations work patience, and experience, and hope, that makes not ashamed." "The chastisement," though "not for the present joyous but grievous," will yield "the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby;" and their "light affliction, which is but for a moment, will work out for" them "a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory."[1]

I cannot conclude without taking notice of the illustration which the subject of discourse gives, of what Tertullian calls "the adorable fulness of the Holy Scriptures." They are indeed full, full to an overflow, of the mind and spirit of Christ, of light and love, of truth and grace. All that man needs to know in reference to his relations to God and eternity, to make him wise, and good, and happy, is to be found there. There is no question respecting the Divine character and government, the solution of which is necessary to human duty or happiness, which is not there satisfactorily settled; and, amid the immense variety of circumstances in which a human being may be placed, there is not one situation to which there is not to be found their appropriate warning, direction, or consolation. The fulness of the Holy Scriptures, as a practical directory, must often have struck with wonder and awe, as well as gratitude and delight, the intelligent Christian. When the ear of his mind is opened to discipline, the Holy Spirit, bringing to remembrance his own oracles, makes him often in the hour of perplexity, in a way which astonishes himself, hear as it were, a word behind him, "This is the way, walk in it."

[1] Rom. v. 3, 5. Heb. xii. 11. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Not merely are there to be found in them wide-reaching principles of duty, which admit of easy application to an endless number and variety of particular cases, but there are, comparatively, few combinations of circumstances, even the most extraordinary, in which the diligent, humble, pious student of the Scriptures, will not find himself furnished there with information and directions, as suited even to the minute peculiarities, or it may be, as he is apt to think it, the absolute singularities of his case, as if these had been immediately before the mind of the inspired writers. He is there taught how to employ all his faculties; how to regulate all his desires; how to behave himself to God and man, to relatives and strangers, to friend and enemy; in retirement and in society; in his own house and in the house of God; in prosperity and in adversity; in youth, in middle life, and in old age; how to think and feel; how to speak and act; how to live and how to die. How so much particular, easily applicable, practical instruction, could, without any appearance of unnatural constraint, be brought within the compass of so moderate a sized volume as the Bible, is indeed extraordinary; and he who is best acquainted with that divine Book, and has been most in the habit of taking it as a "lamp to his feet and a light to his path," will be readiest to say with Tertullian, "I adore the fulness of the Holy Scriptures."

This train of thought is naturally suggested by observing how much varied, important, particular, readily-available instruction, on the interesting subject of the duties of Christians when exposed to persecution on account of their religion, is crowded into the short paragraph with which the subject of this discourse concludes. We have here not a general exhortation to patience and constancy, but directions are given suited to the various forms which persecution might assume. Injuries and insults might be heaped on them: how were they to act in this case? They were not to "render evil for evil, but contrariwise, blessing." Prospects the most appalling might be presented to them for the purpose of shaking their faith: how were they to act in this case? They were not to be afraid of the terror of their enemies, neither were they to be troubled, but to "sanctify the Lord God in their hearts," as the object both of supreme fear and confidence. They might be called on publicly to state and defend the religion on which rested all their hopes: how were they to act in this case? They were to "be always ready to give an answer to every one who asked them a reason of the hope that was in them with meekness and fear." They might be exposed to a sort of attack from which it is peculiarly difficult to defend either themselves or their cause: systematic calumniation. Men might "speak evil of them, and falsely accuse them as evil-doers:" how were they to act in this case? They were to hold "a good conscience," and to maintain "a good conversation in Christ." And what a persecuted Christian must have found in this portion of Scripture, given by inspiration of God, every Christian, if he is but careful enough to search the Scriptures, will find in some portion of it—that which is fitted to make him, as a "man of God, perfect, thoroughly furnished," for work and for warfare.

Note A. p. 433.

The present division of the Holy Scriptures into chapters and verses is not of Divine origin, but is a human invention of comparatively late date, intended chiefly to facilitate reference to any particular portion of the sacred oracles. With the exception of the book of Psalms—the particular poems in which, as separate compositions, given forth at different times and on various occasions, were, from the beginning, divided from each other—all the books, both in the Old Testament and the New, were originally written as so many continued discourses; not only without paragraphs, but with the clauses, and even sentences, undivided by such notes as we call points, and the words themselves not separated by any sensible distance from each other.

The division first made of the Old Testament writings is considerably ancient; probably not much, if at all, posterior to the days of Ezra. The different books were divided into large paragraphs, and verses; which last were, however, merely marked by a point, not numbered. This division was probably made for the convenience of their synagogue worship. Pure Hebrew, in which the Old Testament books are written, ceased to be the vernacular language of the Israelites after the Babylonian captivity. After the return from Babylon, when the sacred writings were read in the synagogue, they were first read in the original, and then interpreted into the Chaldaic or Syro-Chaldaic dialect, which was commonly used by the people. To this mode of reading the Holy Scriptures, it is generally supposed there is a reference, Neh. viii. 8, where it is said that the Levites "read in the book, in the law of the Lord, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." As this was done period by period, it became necessary to adopt some notation to mark the beginning and end of the periods.

The division of the Bible into the chapters, with which we are familiar, is comparatively a modern invention. It was made about the middle of the 13th century, by a cardinal of the Roman Church, Hugo de St. Caro, who formed the first concordance of the Latin Vulgate translation of the Scriptures, for the obvious purpose of facilitating reference to any particular passage or word. This division was adopted by a learned Jew Rabbi, Isaac Nathan, who, about the middle of the 15th century, published the first concordance of the Hebrew Scriptures; and, in addition, he numbered the verses into which the sacred text had been anciently divided.

About a century later, a learned French printer, Robert Stephens, divided the New Testament into verses; and his division, with few exceptions and with very slight variations, has been generally adopted in the editions of the original text, and in the translations of the Scriptures, which have been since published throughout the christian world.

This division of the sacred text is convenient for the purpose of reference; and had it been always judiciously made and accommodated to the different kinds of composition of which the sacred books are made up, might have contributed materially to the more important purpose of interpretation. Like all human works, however, it bears abundant evidence of the imperfection of its authors, and has been productive of some bad as well as of some good consequences. The division, whether of chapters or of verses, is not always judicious: where there is no pause in the discourse, no division in the thoughts, we often find a division in the words; while, on the other hand, where the sense requires such a division, it is not always to be found.

To no part of the sacred writings does the division into chapters and verses less happily apply, than to the epistolary writings of the New Testament. Both from their argumentative character, and their epistolary form, it becomes almost impossible to break them down into such short sections as our verses, without materially impairing their beauty and obscuring their meaning. It would be a considerable help towards the understanding of the apostolical epistles, if the chapters and verses were merely marked on the margin, while the epistle itself was printed as a continuous discourse, broken down only into such paragraphs as it naturally resolves itself into; and indeed we are persuaded, nobody will ever make very satisfactory progress in the study of these most interesting portions of sacred writ, who does not get into the habit of reading them with an almost total disregard of the ordinary divisions.

We have an illustration of these remarks in the words which form the subject of the first division of the third part of this discourse. They form a part of a series of injunctions laid by the apostle on the Christians to whom he wrote, respecting their duty so to behave themselves towards their persecutors as that no discredit should be reflected either on their religion or themselves; but that, on the contrary, the doctrine of God their Saviour might be adorned, and their adversaries have no evil thing to say with truth of its professors. The first injunction is, to abstain from all resentful retaliation, and to meet injury and reproach by kindness both in conduct and in language. This injunction is contained in the 9th verse: and with the illustration and enforcement of this injunction, the

apostle is engaged down to the middle of the 14th verse. Here there is a pause in the discourse, a division in the thought. He proceeds to a second injunction; calling on them to guard against the undue influence of fear, and prescribing a due regard to God as the best means of preventing an undue regard to man. But you will notice there is in our common bibles no division of the words here. You would suppose the second part of the verse just a following out the thought contained in the first; when, in reality, it is what in a discourse we would call entering on the illustration of a new particular. And, as we have here no division where the sense required one, so, at the close of the verse, we have a division where the sense requires there should be none: for the first part of the 15th verse is just the conclusion of the sentence begun in the last part of the 14th,—a part, indeed, of the same quotation from an Old Testament writer. And then again a third, and entirely distinct injunction, is given in the remaining part of the 15th verse,—an injunction to be always ready to give an account of their religion, and its grounds, to all who should call them in question for them. Here again we have a distinct division in the thoughts, unmarked by any corresponding division in the words.

These may appear to some very minute and unimportant remarks, and comparatively they are so; but nothing should be considered as trifling or useless, which goes to remove obscurity or pointlessness from an inspired declaration or precept; or to give it, even in a slight degree, additional clearness or force.

Note B. p. 434.

"Observandum est, duo esse in Novo Testamento e veteri citationum genera. Quædam enim, imo pleraque omnia loca quæ e veteri proferunter in Novo Testamento ejus modi sunt, ut, juxta mentem consilium et scopum Scriptoris ex quo depromuntur, adducantur ad doctrinæ evangelicæ confirmationem. Sed et alia sunt nonnulla in quibus a Novi Testamenti Scriptoribus, non tam spectatur mens consilium et scopus, quam Scriptoris verba duntaxat, quæ quoniam aliquam habent cum iis de quibus loquuntur similitudinem et significationis convenientiam, iis utuntur, non tanquam testimonio et auctoritate, qua velint dictum suum communire, sed per allusionem duntaxat. Cujus modi ferme sunt illa quæ vulgo Noemata seu Gnomas Rhetores vocant, dicta nimirum quædam sententiosa ex poeta aliquo—Virgilio puta vel Homero deprompta, quæ nos solemus ad rem et propositum nostrum accommodare, non quod hoc velimus, poetam idipsum spectasse et in animo habuisse quod nos cum ejus verba usurpamus, sed id grata quadam 'accommodatione' duntaxat a nobis fit, quod allusionibus libenter et impense soliti sint homines delectari."—Matt. xiii. 34. Psal. xlix. 2. Rom. x. 18. Psal. xix. 5. 2 Cor. viii. 15. Exod. xvi. 13.—L. Capellus.

Note C. p. 440.

"Should the empress," says Chrysostom, in his epistle to Cyriacus, "determine to banish me, let her banish me; 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' If she will cast me into the sea, let her cast me into the sea; I will remember Jonah. If she will throw me into a burning fiery furnace; the three children were there before me. If she will throw me to the wild beasts; I will remember that Daniel was in the den of lions. If she will condemn me to be stoned; I shall be the associate of Stephen, the proto-martyr. If she will have me beheaded; the Baptist has submitted to the same punishment. If she will take away my substance; 'naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return to it.'"

DISCOURSE XVI

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST (THEIR NATURE—DESIGN—CONSEQUENCES) AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO CHRISTIANS SUFFERING FOR HIS CAUSE.

1 Pet. iii. 18–22.—For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.

In studying Christianity, as developed in the inspired writings of the New Testament, few things are more fitted to strike the mind, than the intimate, the indissoluble, connection which exists between its principles and its laws, its doctrinal statements and its practical requirements. Its doctrines are such as, if really believed, necessarily lead to the discharge of its duties; and its duties are such as cannot be discharged without a knowledge and belief of its doctrines. They are connected together as the two constituents of human nature; body and soul. The doctrines are embodied in the duties, and the duties are animated by the doctrines.

This is true even of those doctrines which, at first view, seem to partake most of the nature of abstract principles; such as the doctrine of the expiation of human guilt, and the accomplishment of human salvation, through the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the incarnate Son of God. This doctrine, which to many seems a point of mere speculation, having little or nothing to do with the formation of character or the guidance of conduct, is brought forward in the New Testament as the grand motive to christian obedience generally, and to all the various parts of christian obedience. Are Christians exhorted to universal holiness? this is the motive, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Are they exhorted to "walk in love?" the motive is, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor." Are they exhorted to mutual forgiveness? the motive is, "God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us." Are they exhorted to a complying, self-denying spirit? the motive is, "Christ pleased not himself." Are they exhorted to public spirit, in opposition to selfishness? the motive is drawn from "the mind which was in Christ," and which manifested

itself in his emptying and abasing himself, in his laboring, and suffering, and dying, for the salvation of men. Are they exhorted to make pecuniary sacrifices for the relief of their poor brethren? the motive is, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus, in that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Are husbands urged to love their wives? the motive is, "Christ also loved the church," his spouse, "and gave himself for her." And not to multiply examples, are Christians in the passage which I have read as the subject of discourse, called on cheerfully and patiently to endure suffering in the cause of Christ? the motive is, "Christ also once suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, and quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison; which aforetime were disobedient: and having risen from the dead, is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."

In the immediate context, as you are aware, the apostle has been instructing those to whom he was writing how to behave themselves, when exposed to persecution on account of the religion of Christ, so as to reflect honor on Him, on it, and on themselves; and to reconcile them to such sufferings, and induce them to conduct themselves properly under them, he suggests the thought, "that divinely-appointed suffering in a good cause, rightly sustained, is not to be considered as an evil." "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." "It is better, since such is the will of God, that ye doing well suffer:" better not only that ye should suffer doing well, "rather than doing evil;" but better in these circumstances that ye should suffer than ye should not suffer.

It is in illustration and proof of this principle, I apprehend, that the apostle introduces the example of our Lord, the Prince of sufferers. His sufferings were divinely-appointed sufferings; sufferings in the best of all causes: sufferings sustained in the best possible manner; and sufferings terminating in such a way, as very strikingly to show, that divinely-appointed suffering in a good cause, rightly sustained, is rather to be chosen and embraced as a good, than dreaded and shunned as an evil. Such seems to me the general import of the interesting paragraph I have read, excluding from consideration, at present, the 20th and 21st verses, which, being plainly parenthetical, may be left out without at all interrupting the train of thought, and which, being involved in considerable difficulties, may, with greater advantage, be afterwards made a subject of separate examination.

In suffering "for righteousness' sake," you may well account yourselves happy. It is better, since such is the will of God, that you doing well should suffer; for *even*[1] (that is the force of the particle rendered *also*) the Lord Christ, all excellent and glorious as he is, even HE, ONCE suffered, though now and henceforth he suffers no more—is completely and forever exempt from suffering of every kind, in every degree, the ends of his sufferings being completely gained. He suffered, even to the death, "for sins;" not his own, for he had none, but for those of others, of course, then, by the will of God, the express

[1] Καὶ.

appointment of the supreme Judge, "in the stead of sinners;" and he suffered doing well, being and appearing to be "the just One," though "in the room of the unjust;" and these sufferings were for a most holy and benignant object, that he might restore sinful and miserable men to holiness and happiness by bringing them to God. These sufferings, though they ended in a most violent death (for he was put to death, or became dead "in the flesh," or bodily), led to a vivification, a quickening in the Spirit, or spiritually, which manifested itself in his going and preaching to the spirits in prison, whatever that may mean, and to a bodily resurrection too, which was followed by ascension to heaven, where, in the nature in which he had endured so much suffering, He sits "at the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him." Is there not abundant reason here why Christians, the followers of that illustrious sufferer, the Captain of salvation, thus made perfect through suffering, when exposed to suffering for his sake, should count it all joy to be subjected to manifold trials while he is conducting them to glory; should reckon themselves happy because they thus endure; and should consider it better, since such is the will of God, that they doing well should suffer?

For the further illustration of this most interesting and instructive passage of Scripture, I shall call your attention, First, to the illustrious sufferer, "Christ, the just One;" Secondly, to his sufferings—he suffered, suffered even to death; Thirdly, to the nature of his sufferings—they were penal, vicarious, expiatory, for sins, in the room of the unjust; Fourthly, to the design of his sufferings—to bring men to God; and Fifthly, to the consequences of his sufferings—"Being quickened in the Spirit, he went and preached to the spirits in prison; and having risen from the dead he went into heaven, where he is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him." After having illustrated under these heads, the important principles contained in this passage, I shall endeavor to show how they are fitted to serve the purpose for which they are brought forward by the apostle: to reconcile Christians to suffering; to give them both support and direction under their sufferings.

I.—THE SUFFERER.

Let us then, first, inquire into the import of the two descriptive appellations here given to the illustrious Sufferer. He is Christ, the just One.

§ 1.—*Christ.*

First, He is Christ. This is not, strictly speaking, the proper name of Him who bears it. It is one of his official designations; and in this way stands in the same class as Mediator, Redeemer, Saviour. Jesus was his proper name; and Jesus Christ, or rather Jesus the Christ, is not like Simon Peter, or John Mark, a double name, but like John the Baptist, or Herod the king, a proper name, and a descriptive

appellation conjoined. Christ is a Greek word,[1] corresponding in meaning to the Hebrew word Messiah, and the English word anointed.

The Christ, then, is just the Anointed One. Anointing seems, from a very early period, to have been the emblem of consecration; the setting apart of a person or thing to a particular and sacred purpose:[2] and it appears that, among the Jews, consecration to the three sacred offices, the prophetical, priestly, and kingly, was indicated by anointing.[3] In the Old Testament Scriptures, the great Deliverer, who had been promised almost immediately after man by his sin had brought himself into circumstances which made a deliverer necessary, is spoken of as God's Anointed One, with a reference to all the three sacred offices. David speaks of him as Jehovah's Anointed King, Isaiah as his Anointed Prophet, and Daniel as his Anointed Priest.[4] During the period which elapsed from the close of the prophetic canon till the birth of Jesus, no appellation for the promised Deliverer seems to have been so commonly employed as this, The Messiah; and this is still the name which the Jews ordinarily use when they speak of Him whom they hope for, as "the glory of God's people, Israel."

Our Lord is termed *The* Christ, or Anointed One, as standing apart, by himself, far elevated above all other anointed persons; just as he is, amid the countless millions of the sons of men, termed *The* Son of Man.

The appellation Christ, naturally called up to the mind of a believing Jew, and such were all the writers of the New Testament, as well as most of its original readers, much important and interesting truth respecting Him who bore it. The Christ, as they thought of him, was a person in whom all the varied predictions respecting the great promised Deliverer had found, or were to find, their accomplishment: the seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent; the seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed; the great Prophet like unto Moses, whom all men were required to hear and obey; the Priest after the order of Melchizedeck; the Priest on the throne; the Root out of the stem of Jesse; the Branch of Jehovah; the Angel of the covenant; the Lord of the temple; the wonderful Counsellor; the mighty God; the Father of the future age; the Prince of peace; Immanuel, God with us; Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness, our Justification, our Justifier.[5] While the name Christ naturally calls up all the truth respecting Him who bears the name, it brings him especially before the mind as Prophet, Priest, and King; the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King; the Prophet, the great revealer of truth respecting the Divine character and will; the Priest, the only expiator of human guilt, and reconciler of man to God; the King, the supreme and sole legitimate ruler over the minds and hearts of mankind. And he not only fills these offices and performs these functions, but he has been anointed to do so: that is, in figurative language, he has been divinely appointed, divinely qualified, di-

[1] Χριστός. [2] Gen. xxviii. 18; xxxi. 13; xxxv. 14.
[3] 1 Sam. xxiv. 6. 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. Lam. iv. 20. Lev. iv. 3.
[4] Psal. ii. 3; xx. 6; xlv. 7. Isa. lxi. 1. Dan. ix. 24–26.
[5] Gen. iii. 15; xxii. 18. Deut. xviii. 15. Psal. cx. 4. Zech. vi. 13. Isa. ix. 6; xi. 1 10 vii. 14; iv. 2. Jer. xxiii. 6. Mal. iii. 1.

vinely commissioned, and divinely accredited; divinely appointed, "set up from everlasting," God's "elect" one; divinely qualified, the Spirit of the Lord was given him, not by measure; divinely commissioned, "called of God as was Aaron," "the Father sent him to be the Saviour of the world;" and divinely accredited, the Father who sent him bears witness of him, "both with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." [1] So full of meaning is the appellation CHRIST, a word which I am afraid we often use without having any very definite idea in our minds; a word in which, however, is folded up the whole saving truth, so that he who, in the true, full import of the words, "believes that Jesus is the Christ," believes the saving truth, and has the privilege conferred on him of being a son of God.[2]

§ 2.—*The just One.*

The second appellation given to the glorious Sufferer spoken of in the text is, the just, or the righteous, One. "The just One," as well as the anointed One, is an appellation given to the great promised Deliverer in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. In the last prophetic words of David, he speaks of his Son and Lord under this name. "The just One ruleth among men;" for so do the best Scripture critics render the words translated in our version, "He that ruleth among men must be just." It is of him of whom it was predicted that a bone of him should not be broken, that it is said by the same inspired writer, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" or just One. The prophet Isaiah speaks of Him as Jehovah's "righteous servant;" and the prophet Zechariah, congratulating the church on his appearance, exclaims, "Behold, thy King cometh. He is just, having salvation." [3]

In obvious allusion to such passages, we find the appellation not unfrequently given by the New Testament writers to our Lord Jesus. "Your fathers," says Stephen, "have slain them who spake before of the coming of the just One." "Ye denied," says the Apostle Peter to his countrymen, "the Holy One and the just." "The God of our fathers," said Ananias to Saul of Tarsus, "hath chosen thee to see that just One, and to hear the words of his mouth." "Ye have condemned and killed the just One," says the Apostle James to his unbelieving countrymen. "We have an advocate with the Father," says the Apostle John, "Jesus Christ the righteous." [4]

The appellation is most accurately descriptive, both personally and officially, of Him who wears it. Personally our Lord is absolutely free from sin, and in heart and life completely conformed to the requisitions of the holy, just, and good law of God. The man Christ Jesus came into the world free from every taint or tendency to evil; and if the questions be asked, in reference to him, "What is man, that he should be clean? or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Who can bring a clean thing out of an un-

[1] Prov. viii. 23. Isa. xlii. 1. Heb. v. 4. Isa. xi. 2–4; xlix. 6. Acts ii. 22. John v. 37
[2] 1 John v. 1.
[3] 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. Psal. xxxiv. 19, comp. with 20. Isa. liii. 11. Zech. ix. 9.
[4] Acts vii. 32; iii. 14; xxii. 14. James v. 6. 1 John ii. 1.

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clean?" the evangelist will answer them: "The Holy Ghost came upon his virgin mother, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her; and that which was born of her was a Holy thing, and was called," "and was indeed," "the Son of God." [1] This original purity was never in the slightest degree stained. Though exposed to the assaults of the great author of evil, that adversary did not prevail against, that son of mischief did not overcome, him. Though in a world full of temptation and sin, he remained untainted; though tried both by its smiles and its frowns, its terrors and its allurements, he never, in the slightest degree, imbibed its spirit, or imitated its manners. He kept himself "unspotted from the world," being "in it, not of it;" and he died, as he lived, a stranger to guilt and depravity. No action, no word, ever escaped from him, no thought, no desire, ever arose in his bosom, inconsistent with the requisitions or with the spirit of the Divine law. He left this world as he entered it, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." [2]

But the character of our Lord was not merely free from faults, it was distinguished by every possible moral excellence. Every holy principle in absolute perfection reigned in his mind; and his conduct was a uniform tenor of perfect obedience to that law which was in his heart. He fulfilled the law in both of its great requisitions. "He loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; and he loved his neighbor as himself." He "did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God." He fully did all that God required, and cheerfully suffered all that God appointed. In principle, in extent, in continuance, his obedience completely answered the demands of the holy law, which is spiritual and exceeding broad. "His meat was to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work." [3] All excellences were found in him, and found in their due proportion; and they wrought together in uninterrupted harmony. "He was all fair; there was no spot in him."

"The just One" is an appellation equally applicable to him in his official administration as in his personal character; no less applicable to him as the Christ, than as the man Jesus. He is "faithful to him who appointed him." He was appointed to glorify God in the salvation of an innumerable multitude of mankind; and, in the accomplishment of this great work, "righteousness has been the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." He has shown in every part of his work that "he loves righteousness and hates iniquity." As a Prophet, he has faithfully delivered the message he has received from his Father; he has "declared him whom no man has seen at any time;" he has "manifested his name." His "mouth spoke truth; wickedness was an abomination to his lips." "All the words of his mouth were in righteousness; there was nothing froward or perverse in them." As a Priest, he has "fulfilled all righteousness." He has fully satisfied all the demands of the Divine law on those in whose room he stood. When exaction was made, he answered it. There was not one requisition of the law, but he readily and completely met it. He obeyed the whole precept; he bare the entire penalty of the violated law. He "finished transgression, made

[1] Job xv. 14; xiv. 4. Luke i. 35. [2] Heb. vii. 26. [3] John iv. 34.

an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness." He "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor;" and thus "magnified the law and made it honorable." And as a King, he "reigns in righteousness," and rules in judgment. "Justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne." "The sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre." He is the true Melchizedek, the King of righteousness, as well as the Prince of peace. "In majesty he rides prosperously in the cause of truth, and meekness, and righteousness." His administration in reference to his own people, is an administration of pure grace; but it is "grace reigning through righteousness unto everlasting life;" and ruling, as he does, in the midst of his enemies, his royal style and appellation is, "FAITHFUL AND TRUE, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."[1]

While it is obvious, from these remarks, that the appellation, the just One, is admirably descriptive both of the personal character, and the official administration of our Lord, there can be but little doubt that the great design of the inspired writer in using it here, is to fix our minds on the facts, that our Lord Jesus Christ, of all the sons of Adam, is the only just One; all the rest are unjust; and that, from the spotlessness of his nature, the perfection of his obedience to the preceptive part of the law, and the cheerfulness of his submission to its sanctionary enactments, all infinitely dignified by that divine nature which was in personal union with the human nature in which he obeyed and suffered, there is in the sacrifice which, by the appointment of his Father, he offered up, an infinity of merit or righteousness, which, for all the purposes of law and justice, more than compensates for all the demerit and unrighteousness of those innumerable offences of the innumerable multitude of unjust ones in whose room he stood; so that HE, the righteous One, "who knew no sin," having been "made sin" for them, they who were nothing but sin "might be made the righteousness of God in him." The just One here, is just equivalent to Isaiah's "Jehovah's righteous servant, who justifies many, having borne their iniquities;" or Jeremiah's, "Jehovah our righteousness," in whom, in whom alone, any unrighteous sinner can find righteousness; in whom every sinner, however unrighteous, will assuredly find righteousness, believing in Him.[2]

II.—HIS SUFFERINGS.

Having thus shortly illustrated the two descriptive appellations here given to the illustrious Sufferer, let us now, in the second place, turn our attention to his sufferings. "Christ, the just One, suffered; being put to death in the flesh." The exalted personage to whom these appellations belong, existed from before all ages in a state of the most perfect blessedness: "He was in the beginning with God," "in the

[1] Heb. iii. 2. Isa. xi. 5. Psal. xlv. 7. John i. 18; xvii. 6. Prov. viii. 7, 8. Matt. iii. 15. Isa. liii. 7, Lowth. Dan. ix. 24. Eph. v. 2. Isa. xlii. 21; xxxii. 1. Psal. lxxxix. 14; xlv. 6, 4. Rom. v. 21. Rev. xix. 11.

[2] 2 Cor. v. 21. Isa. liii. 11. Jer. xxii. 6.

bosom of the Father," enjoying glory with him before the foundation of the world, delighting in him, and delighted in by him. A state of suffering was not then his original condition.[1]

But when, in order to gain the great objects of his eternal appointment, he, in the fulness of the times, took on him the nature of men in its present humbled state, a state resulting from their violation of the Divine law, "the likeness of sinful flesh," he, of course, became a sufferer: for "man born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble; he comes forth as a flower, and is cut down; he flees as a shadow, and continues not." He is "born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards."[2]

It is obvious, however, that by Divine appointment, Christ, the just One, was a sufferer far beyond the ordinary lot of mankind. His sufferings commenced with his birth. Unfurnished with the accommodations which the humblest ordinarily enjoy in entering into life, his birth-place was a stable, his cradle a manger. While yet an infant, his life was endangered by the unprincipled and cruel jealousy of a tyrant, and he was exposed to the hazards and fatigues of a hurried flight into a foreign country. At an early age he felt the pressure of the "primal curse," "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread," and engaged in the toilsome labors of mechanical industry. We have no reason to believe that our Lord was ever affected by disease, but he experienced all the other sinless infirmities of our nature. He was hungry, and thirsty, and weary; felt the inconveniences of the extremes of cold and heat: and was no stranger to disappointment, vexation, and sorrow, and the pangs of unrequited kindness and violated friendship. Destitute of the conveniences and comforts, he was but scantily and precariously furnished with the necessaries, of life. He seems often to have been indebted for a supply of these to the hospitality of others; and while "the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, he had not where to lay his head."[3] Though followed and admired by multitudes, he was the object of the contempt and hatred of by far the greater part of his countrymen of all classes. He was the butt of the great man's scorn, and the poor man's contumely. He was represented as a mover of sedition and a speaker of blasphemy, an impostor or a madman, a glutton and a drunkard, an emissary of Satan, a friend and companion of the basest of men.

Nor were his sufferings limited to those inflicted by his fellow-men. He was exposed to temptations to sin from malignant spiritual beings, which to his holy mind must have been productive of the most poignant anguish. On one occasion, for forty successive days, in a desolate wilderness, he was subjected to these attacks; and we read that, when his infernal tormentor left him, he did so only "for a season." We know that, in the time of the deepest complication of the Saviour's sufferings, he returned. That was his hour when "the power of darkness" especially exerted itself.[4] The degree of suffering occasioned to a being so holy and so benignant, by witnessing the empire of the evil one, in the depravity and wretchedness of mankind, can be very

[1] John i. 1, 18; xvii. 5.
[2] Rom. viii. 3. Job xiv. 1; v. 7.
[3] Matt. viii. 20. Luke iv. 13.
[4] Matt. iv. 1–11. Luke xxii. 53.

inadequately conceived of by even the holiest and most benevolent of imperfect men.

The severest of all his sufferings, however, were those which came immediately from the hand of God as the manifestation of the divine righteous displeasure at the sins of those in whose room he stood. These sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings. There is something in the inspired description of them, that excites amazement rather than communicates definite information: "A horror of great darkness" comes over his mind; "he begins to be sorrowful, to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;" he "becomes suddenly possessed with fear, horror, and amazement; encompassed with grief and overwhelmed with sorrow; pressed down with consternation and dejection of mind; tormented with anxiety and disquietude of spirit."[1] Under his intolerable load of anguish, he pours out his heart in supplication to his Father, "And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Again, and again, he, with strong crying and tears, repeats the same prayer, and an angel is sent to strengthen him. He was "poured out like water, his heart was like wax: it was melted in the midst of his bowels."[2]

But the sufferings of Christ, the just One, were not yet completed. The awful solemnities of Gethsemane, its preternatural sufferings and consolations, were broken in on by a band of ruffians, led on by a traitor disciple. Deserted by his friends, who had lately assured him of inviolable fidelity, he was dragged as a felon before the tribunal of the high priest, and there accused of the foulest crimes, and subjected to the vilest indignities. He was reviled and insulted in all the forms which wanton, vulgar malignity could invent. They spat in his face, and buffeted him with the palms of their hands. And while thus abused by his enemies, he was basely denied with oaths and execrations by one of his followers, who had lately drawn his sword in his defence, and declared that, though he should die with him, he would never deny him. With an impious mockery of justice, under the form of law, he was condemned as worthy of death for imposture and blasphemy. Hurried before the judgment-seat of the Jewish procurator, he was there accused of the state-crimes of sedition and treason; and though declared innocent of them, his dastardly judge delivered him up to the will of his inveterate foes, sentencing him first to the scourge, and then to the cross. The barbarous soldiery, who were intrusted with carrying the unrighteous sentence into execution, robed him in the garments of mock royalty, and wreathed a garland of thorns round his temples, in savage mockery of his claims to be a king. On his lacerated, bleeding, enfeebled body, he bore the ponderous instrument of torture and death to the place of execution; and, stripped of his raiment, he was there affixed to the cross, amid the sarcasms of the chief priests and the shouts of the populace. To add to his ignominy, two notorious malefactors were crucified along with him, and the middle cross was assigned him as the vilest criminal of

[1] The student will do well to consult the learned note in "Pearson on the Creed."—Art. iv. p. 190, fol. 1676.

[2] Luke xxii. 44. Psal. xxii. 14.

the three. While hanging on the cross in agony, his enemies continued to insult him by their contemptuous speeches; and, instead of water to quench his thirst, they offered him vinegar mixed with gall. To crown his sufferings a dark cloud was interposed between him and his Father; the comforts of sensible intercourse with HIM, the source of his happiness, were withdrawn; and those words so big with anguish, came forth from a breaking heart, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Such were the sufferings of Christ, the just One.

The sufferings were sufferings to death. When he suffered he was "put to death in the flesh." After hanging on the cross for a number of hours, "he bowed the head, and gave up the ghost." His death was a violent death; and of all violent deaths that probably which inflicted most pain on the sufferer. During these tedious hours he suffered every moment more than the agonies of an ordinary death. It was of all modes of punishment, too, the most ignominious. No Roman citizen, however foul his crime, could be legally crucified. It was the punishment appropriated to felonious slaves. In being nailed to the cross, our Lord was exhibited as an outcast from society, a man who had no rights, a person unworthy of being treated as an ordinary human criminal; "a worm, and no man." It was also a death, in consequence of a Jewish law which required the dead bodies of criminals who had suffered capital punishment to be hung on a tree, as a token of their having suffered the vengeance of the law, which marked the peculiar penal character of his sufferings. It intimated that he died accursed, condemned of God as the victim of human transgression; "As it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."[1] Surely, well then may we, with all the emphasis that can be given to the term, pronounce, that "even Christ, the just One, suffered."

What his sufferings were, none knew, none can ever know, but he who endured, and he who inflicted them. We know he endured the adequate penalty of sin; but what that is who can tell? We know it is the displeasure of God; but "who knoweth the power of HIS anger? According to his fear, so is his wrath." The most dreadful apprehension comes infinitely short of the more dreadful reality. Never was there a sufferer like Christ, the just One. He was, in a far higher sense than the weeping prophet, "the man who saw affliction by the rod of God's wrath." He was "the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" "Behold, and see all ye that go by, if there be any sorrow like unto the sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger."[2] To borrow the words of an old divine, "If hunger and thirst, if revilings and contempt, if sorrows and agonies, if stripes and buffetings, if condemnation and crucifixion be suffering, Jesus suffered. If the infirmities of our nature, if the weight of our sins, if the malice of man, if the machinations of Satan, if the hand of God, could make him suffer, our Saviour suffered." And of this wonderful fact we have the most abundant evidence: "If the annals of the times, if the writings of his apostles, if the death of his martyrs, if the confessions of the Gentiles, if the scoffs of the Jews, be testimonies, Jesus suffered."[3]

[1] Gal. iii 13. [2] Psal. xc. 11. Isa. liii. 3. Lam. iii. 1; i. 12. [3] Pearson.

Such views of the Saviour as have now been presented to you, are intended and calculated to have an important practical influence on our hearts and lives. If he is the divinely appointed, qualified, commissioned, accredited revealer of the will of God, let us "hear him," him alone, as the authoritative teacher of religious truth. His word is the word of Him that sent him. Let us not disregard it, let us not reject it, let us not mutilate it, let us not adulterate it. Let us believe and obey his word, and humbly submit our minds to the teaching of his Spirit.

If he is the divinely appointed, qualified, commissioned, accredited expiator of human guilt, let us rely with unsuspecting confidence on the great sacrifice which, through the Eternal Spirit, he offered, without spot and blemish, to the Supreme Judge, and on the all-prevalent intercession which, on the ground of that sacrifice, he ever lives to make for all coming to God by him.

If he is the divinely appointed, qualified, commissioned, accredited King over God's holy hill of Zion, let us seek to know his laws and ordinances, and, knowing them, let us walk in them all blameless, confiding in his power to protect us amid, and to save us from, all our enemies.

If he is the righteous one, let us receive him as "of God, made to us righteousness."[1] Let us, instead of going about to "establish our own righteousness," seek to "be made the righteousness of God in him;" seek to "win him, and to be found in him;" and, deeply feeling that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," let us gladly and gratefully say, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness: in the Lord I am justified, and in the Lord I glory." And let us not forget that, as the righteous One, he is not only the ground of our acceptance, but the pattern for our imitation. Let us seek to be "righteous even as he was righteous." Let it be our desire to be "in the world as he was in the world," having his mind in us, and having "his life manifested in our mortal flesh."[2]

Did Christ, the righteous One, suffer; and so suffer, for us? How inconceivably malignant must sin be, which made such sufferings, of such a glorious person, necessary to its expiation and pardon; and how inconceivably strong must his love be, which made him willingly undergo such sufferings, rather than that we should be exposed to the tremendous consequences of unexpiated, unforgiven iniquity!

O, how should we hate sin! O, how should we love the Saviour! Nothing is better fitted to animate and strengthen these two master principles of christian holiness, the hatred of sin, and the love of the Saviour, than the believing contemplation of His sufferings for sin, in the room of sinners. Under the influence of the truth now stated, let each of us say in his heart, "Herein is love, not that I loved him, but that he loved me, and gave himself to be a propitiation for my sin." I would put that to death in my flesh, which put him to death in the flesh. I would mortify my members which are on the earth, I would crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts; and forasmuch as He has suffered for me in the flesh, borne my sin in his own body

[1] 1 Cor. i. 30. Rom. x. 3. 2 Cor. v. 21. Phil. iii. 8, 9. Isa. lxiv. 6.
[2] Isa xlv. 24, 25. 1 John iii. 7; iv. 17. Phil. ii. 5. 2 Cor. iv. 11.

to the tree, that I, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness, I will arm myself with the same mind, that I no longer live the rest of my time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; and taught by the grace of God, in Christ his Son, the righteous One suffering for my sins, in my stead, I will "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world; looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." [1]

III.—THE NATURE OF HIS SUFFERINGS.

We proceed now to call your attention to the account contained in the text, of the nature of these sufferings of "Christ the just One." They were sufferings "for sins," "for the unjust;" on account of sins, in the room of sinners. These two expressions seem plainly to intimate that our Lord's sufferings were PENAL, VICARIOUS, and EXPIATORY; in other and plainer words, that they were the manifestation of the Divine displeasure against sin, against the sin of men, and were intended, and are found effectual, to render the pardon of sin and the salvation of sinners consistent with, and gloriously illustrative of, the perfections of the Divine character, and the principles of the Divine government. That is what we mean, when we say these sufferings were penal, vicarious, and expiatory. Let us, shortly, look at these three distinct, but inseparably connected, characters of our Lord's sufferings.

§ 1.—*Penal.*

First, then, the sufferings of our Lord were penal sufferings. This was their grand, their leading characteristic. They were not disciplinary; intended to perfect his character. This is the view which is consistently enough taken of them by those who deny his divinity, and consider him as a man of our own order, the son of Joseph and Mary; and to which, with less consistency, some countenance has been given by men who held a purer faith. He was, throughout his whole course, holy, harmless, undefiled. His character was perfect from the beginning. He was, in every stage of his mortal life, just what he should have been; entirely conformed to the will of God. His life was not the acquirement, but the manifestation, of excellence. Being perfect in a moral sense, he needed not to be perfected.

He, indeed, "learned obedience by the things which he suffered;" [2] but that does not mean, that he was disciplined by his sufferings into obedience. "The rod and reproof" were not necessary to teach him to obey. His Father's law was in his heart; and to obey was as natural to him as to breathe. Neither does it mean, he learned by his sufferings how painful and difficult a thing obedience is; for it was

[1] 1 John iv. 10. Col. iii. 5. Gal. v. 24. 1 Phil. iv. 1, 2. Tit. ii. 12–14.
[2] Heb. v. 8.

just because it was obedience, that suffering, otherwise intolerable, was readily borne by him. It was "his meat to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work." [1] It means, that by his sufferings he became practically acquainted with the full amount of the obedience, "obedience unto death," which was required of him as the Redeemer of man, and by which he was "perfected," became fully accomplished, as to merit authority and sympathy, for the discharge of all his functions as "the Captain of salvation, leading many sons to glory;" "the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him." [2]

Nor was the great design of our Lord's sufferings to give evidence of his Divine mission, nor to afford opportunity for that display of the suffering virtues which was necessary to his being a perfect example to his followers. Both these ends have been gained by his sufferings; but the first of these ends might have been gained without suffering at all; and if the second had been the only or the chief end in view, suffering in degree more like that to which the bulk of mankind are exposed, we are ready to think, would have better served that purpose. There is much, very much, in the nature and in the extremity of our Lord's sufferings, which both these hypotheses leave utterly unaccounted for.

The primary object of these sufferings was to manifest the displeasure of God against sin. They were "for sins." They were the very evils which, by Divine appointment, are the result of the violation of his holy, just, and good law. Christ was treated just as if he had been a sinner, a very great sinner, the greatest of sinners. In the kind and degree of his sufferings, there was something that, even to his unreflecting countrymen, marked him as "stricken of God," [3] a doomed person.

Nor are we to think of these evils as merely the natural result of the appearing of such a being as the incarnate Son of God in a world peopled by guilty, depraved men, suffering under the partial infliction of the curse which their disobedience has incurred. This character of our Lord's sufferings was the result of express Divine appointment. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." "The Lord made to meet on him the iniquity of us all;" so that exaction was made and he answered it. Though he knew no sin, he was "made sin;" constituted liable to sufferings expressive of God's displeasure against sin. Though he deserved nothing but blessings, he "was made a curse;" that is, he was doomed, divinely doomed, to suffering on account of sin.[4]

The peculiar manner of his death marked, and was intended to mark, the penal nature of the whole course of suffering of which it was the close. In the Mosaic law it was provided, that the bodies of all who were put to death, by whatever means, for crime, should be exposed on a gibbet, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Every one whose body was hung on a tree, was thus publicly declared to have paid his life as a forfeit to justice.[5] To the enlightened eye, there is found on the cross another inscription besides that which Pilate ordered to be written there: THE VICTIM OF GUILT. THE WAGES OF

[1] John iv. 34. [2] Heb. v. 9. [3] Isa. liii. 4.
[4] Gal. iv. 4. Isa. liii. 6, margin. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13. [5] See note A.

SIN. But how is this? How does, how can, the just One thus die for sins? How is the innocent, the perfect, God-man treated, as if he were a sinner; the chief of sinners?

§ 2.—*Vicarious.*

The answer to this questien is to be found in the second character of his sufferings. When the just One died "for sins," he died "for the unjust:" in the room of the unjust; in other words, his sufferings were vicarious. By Divine appointment he suffered what sinners deserved, that provision might be made for their being delivered from the sufferings which they had merited, and to which they were doomed. "Messiah was cut off, but not for himself." The just One suffered "for sins," but it was "in the room of the unjust." [1]

There is no possibility of reconciling the penal sufferings of the just One with the wisdom, benignity, or justice of the Divine character and government, but on this supposition. The difficulty is great, even if you take the lowest ground that can be taken, the ordinary Socinian ground; for, how are you to account for the benignant and righteous Governor of the world treating, or permitting to be treated, as a sinner, as a great sinner, an innocent and perfect man? But just as you elevate, in your conception, the sufferer in the scale of being, the difficulty increases, till, when the truth is stated, it swells beyond all possibility of being grasped by any created mind; the Son of God in human nature, all excellent, and infinitely beloved of his Father, is treated as if he were a sinner! "Wonder, O heavens: be astonished, O earth."

On the supposition that he was the substitute of guilty men, that he voluntarily took their place in accordance with the benignant will of his Father, and, standing in their place met with their desert; the darkness which covers this part of the divine procedure is, in some measure, dispelled. We deserved to endure every kind and degree of suffering. We deserved to die accursed. He, standing in our room, met not with what he personally deserved, but with what we deserved.

This account of the matter, it may be said, removes one difficulty; but it is only by creating another. And it is true there is a difficulty, and a great one: How came he to occupy our place? But this difficulty is of a totally different character from that which we have just been considering. In the former case, we were perplexed with an apparent want of wisdom, righteousness, and benignity in the Divine dispensation; but admit, what cannot well be denied, that the Son of God had complete power over that human nature which he had taken into union with his divinity, and all foundation for accusing the Divine government of injustice, for treating him according to the character which he had voluntarily assumed, is obviously removed: and take into consideration the immeasurable glory which was to accrue to the character and government of God, in the prevention of an accumulation of sin and misery through all eternity, which baffles all power of imagination to estimate, and the securing of a corresponding accumulation of holy happiness, which this strange dispensation is fitted to

[1] Dan. ix. 26.

secure, which, so far as we know, could not have been secured in any other way, which we are sure could not have been secured in any other way so well. then, instead of an apparent want, there is an obvious superabundance, of wisdom and benignity in it. We do not cease to wonder,—if possible, we wonder more than ever; but the expression of our wonder is not, "Doth God pervert judgment? Doth the Almighty pervert judgment?" It is, "O the depth of the riches both of the divine knowledge and wisdom, and righteousness and grace. How unsearchable are his counsels, and his ways past finding out!"[1] The difficulty now is, not to reconcile incompatibilities, but to comprehend infinities. There is still a mystery; but it is a bright, not a dark one. It is the mystery of Divine holiness and kindness; and its contemplation at once awes and delights as we fear Jehovah and his goodness. "Thy mercy is in the heavens, Holy, Holy, Holy One. How excellent is thy loving-kindness! Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"

The doctrine of our Lord's substitution has plainly, then, at least this proof of truth—that it, and it alone, accounts satisfactorily for the facts of the case, and leaves the subject free from all difficulties, except such as necessarily arise out of its nature. But this is but a small part of the evidence in its support.

The doctrine of the vicarious, as well as penal, nature of our Lord's sufferings, is implied in all those passages of Scripture, and they are very numerous, in which he is represented as having been a sacrifice for sin. The circumstance that the term "sin" is often used in the Hebrew Scriptures to signify a sin-offering, is a very strong proof that the victim was considered as standing in the room of the sinner; and how could the fact be more plainly stated than in the words of the Jewish legislator, "Aaron shall lay his hand on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat?" When Christ, then, is said to "have had his soul made," or "to have made his soul a sacrifice for sin;" when he is said to be "a propitiation," that is, a propitiatory sacrifice "in his blood;" when he is said to be "sacrificed for us as our passover;" when he is said to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; when he is said to have been "offered to bear the sins of many," we are plainly taught that he stood in our room, and bore the penal consequences of our violation of the Divine law.[2]

But the doctrine is not only requisite to account for the facts of the case, and necessarily implied in all those passages of Scripture where Christ is represented as a victim, and his death as a sacrifice; but it is frequently stated in the most explicit language in the Holy Scriptures. I shall quote a few passages. Speaking of Jehovah's righteous servant, Isaiah says, "We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" we reckoned him a person punished signally for his own great, though unknown, crimes; "but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastise-

[1] Job viii. 3. Rom. xi. 33.

[2] Lev. xvi. 21. Isa. liii. 10. Rom. iii. 25. Θῦμα, not ἐπίθεμα, is the proper supplement to ἱλαστήριον.—1 Cor. v. 7. Heb. ix. 26, 28.

ment of our peace was on him. The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all." Exaction was made, and he became answerable. "My righteous servant, by his knowledge, shall justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Numbered with the transgressors, he bore the sins of many." "Christ died *for* the ungodly" in the way in which some would dare to die for a good man; that is, to undergo death in his stead. "Christ bare our sins in his own body on a tree," "or to the tree."[1] These statements are so very explicit, that one is disposed to say, if the vicarious nature of our Lord's sufferings be not revealed in them, it is impossible that it should be revealed; for language furnishes no terms more clear and unequivocal for this idea than those which have been already employed.

§ 3.—*Expiatory.*

The third idea which the language of the text conveys respecting the nature of our Lord's sufferings is, that they were expiatory. When he suffered in the room of sinners, those evils which were the manifestations of the Divine displeasure against their sins, it was in order to expiate or make atonement for their sins; or, in other words, to render the pardon of their sins consistent with the perfections of the Divine character, the honor of the Divine law, and the stability of the Divine government; and, as this was the design of his sufferings, so it has been completely gained by them.

This was the design of our Lord's sufferings. The prophet Daniel informs us, that a great event was to take place at a fixed period, even that "Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself." And what was to be the object of this? "To finish the transgression, to make an end of sin; to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness." John the Baptist describes our Lord as "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Our Lord himself says, that he came to "give himself a ransom for many." The apostle informs us, that "he came in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and that "God made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Indeed, what could be the object of vicarious endurance of penal evil but expiation?[2]

This end our Lord's sufferings have completely gained. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." We are redeemed by this price, so "much more precious than silver and gold." "In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." "He is set forth a propitiation for our sins, through faith in his blood." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world."[3]

In this glorious truth, that the vicarious sufferings of our Lord have made full expiation for our sins, we ought joyfully to acquiesce, even though we were utterly incapable of perceiving how the means employed were fitted to gain the end. God, who knew what the expiation of

[1] Isa. liii. 5–7, 11, 12. Rom. v. 6–8. 1 Pet. ii. 24.
[2] Dan. ix. 24–26. John i. 29. Matt. xx. 28. 2 Cor. v. 21. Heb. ix. 26.
[3] 1 John i. 7. 1 Pet. i. 18. Eph. i. 7. Rom. iii. 25. 1 John ii. 2.

sin required, appointed his incarnate Son to be the victim of human guilt, making to meet on him the iniquities of us all; and he has expressed, in the most unequivocal manner, that he is well pleased with the sacrifice which has been presented. "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do," said the Saviour. "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." And the Father heard him and answered him. He raised him from the dust of death, and placed him at his own right hand, and gave him all power in heaven and in earth, that he might give eternal life to all coming to the Father by him; that in expecting pardon and salvation on the ground of his expiatory sacrifice, "our faith and hope might be in God."[1]

But when we look at the whole wondrous dispensation as unfolded in Scripture, we cannot help saying, "It *became* him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things,"[2] *thus* to dispense pardon and salvation. There is more honor done to the Divine law by the incarnate Son of God yielding, in the room of the guilty, a holy obediential submission to its penal sanction, than could have been done it by their everlasting destruction. We wonder how the Father should not spare his Son, but deliver him up to be the victim of human guilt. We wonder how "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," the Creator and Lord of the universe, should have in human nature made himself a sacrifice; but we do not wonder that the Father was propitiated by that sacrifice, we do not wonder that by that sacrifice the Son "purged our sins." We wonder that "he, by whom and for whom all things were created, that are in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers," who is before them all, and by whom they all subsist, should, "in fashion as a man," shed his blood on a cross; but we do not wonder that "through that blood we should have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins." We not only believe it because God says it; but we see that, if He has been the propitiation for our sins, God is just, that he is "the just God" as well as "the Saviour, while he justifies the ungodly, the sinner believing in Jesus;" and we feel the conclusiveness of the apostle's noble argument: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."[3]

These remarks on the nature of our Lord's sufferings as penal, vicarious, and expiatory, force on our minds the reflection,—How fearful are the state and prospects, how certain and dreadful will be the destruction, of those sinners who are not, by the faith of the truth, savingly interested in the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Jesus

[1] John xvii. 4, 5. 1 Pet. i. 21. [2] Heb. ii. 10.
[3] Heb. i. 3. Col. i. 14–16. Rom. iii. 25, 26. Heb. ix. 13–15.

Christ! "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

"Had it been possible for sin to be pardoned, and for sinners to be saved, without the atonement made by the sufferings and death of the Son of God, we may be sure that these sufferings and that death would never have been endured." No. God would have spared his Son. He would not have given him up for us could sin have been pardoned without being expiated, or could it have been expiated at a less cost, by a less noble victim. We argue this on the ground of Divine wisdom, justice, and goodness. That wisdom does nothing in vain; that justice could not afflict the guiltless but with his own consent, and for an adequate end; that goodness could inflict no needless suffering, especially on one who was worthily the object of his entire complacency, his infinite delight. If it had been possible that the salvation of a guilty world could have been effected without atonement, without such an atonement Christ had not died. Nothing presents to the mind more strikingly than this, the impossibility of sin being pardoned, or the sinner saved, without a personal participation in the expiatory efficacy of the one great sacrifice. "There is not a surer proof of the reality of hell than the cross; not one clearer evidence of the certainty of future vengeance than the means provided for averting it. Had the punishment of iniquity not been under the Divine government a sure and settled thing, we should never have heard of such an atonement, or any atonement, being made for it. Calvary confirms the sentences of Sinai. What justice thundered from Sinai, mercy, though with tearful eye, yet with unfaltering voice, whispers from Calvary, and the announcement is more fearful in the whisper than in the thunder."[1] The soul that has sinned, and puts away from it the blood of the only atoning sacrifice, must die, die the second death. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. "His blood cleanseth from all sin;" but if you put it away from you as "a common thing," your blood must be shed, the life of your souls must answer for it; and yet there can be no remission, there is no atonement in your sufferings, there can be none; for there is no adequate satisfaction to the demands of law and justice.

And the destruction of the neglecter, the despiser, of the blood of the Son, by whom alone there is expiation, will be as dreadful as it is certain. If we form our judgment of the amount of the penalty from the amount of the expiation, no light thought of it will for a moment lodge within us. Nowhere is the lesson "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,"[2] more alarmingly uttered than from the cross. The wrath of God is on the unpardoned sinner, and it must abide on him if he lay not hold of the hope set before him in the gospel: if, by the faith of the truth, he do not become one with him who suffered, the just in the room of the unjust. Who knoweth the power of this wrath? Look to the cross, and find there the most adequate

[1] These sentences within inverted commas, in this paragraph, and many of the thoughts in it and the following one, are borrowed from one, to whose valuable writings the author owes ampler and heavier obligations—his esteemed and beloved brother and friend, Dr. Wardlaw.

[2] Heb. x. 31.

answer that can be given to this dreadful question. He who hangs there knows the power of this wrath. Think on what He suffered; and learn to think justly of the evil of sin, and of what awaits the obstinate unbelieving sinner. If God spared not his Son, standing in the room of sinners, shall he spare the sinner who madly insists on keeping his own place, and refuses to seek shelter under the overshadowing wings of the angel of the covenant? No; there is no salvation without pardon; no pardon without atonement; no atonement without satisfaction; no satisfaction but in the atonement of Christ Jesus. No; "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin;" and to him who rejects it, there remaineth nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, to devour the adversaries." [1]

I cannot close this section of the discourse with these tremendous words. No. Unbelieving, impenitent sinner, thou art yet within the sphere, throughout which the infinite atonement is shedding its saving influence. Once more, it may be only once more, thou hearest the sincere, affectionate call of "God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses:" "Be reconciled." He who knew no sin, has been made sin in the room of men, that they may be made the righteousness of God in him. "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" "Behold the Lamb of God bearing, and bearing away, the sin of the world." "Be it known to you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sin." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief; that he came to "give his flesh for the life of the world;" that "his blood cleanseth us from all sin;" and that "he is able to save to the uttermost all coming to God by him." [2] Believe, and live. Persist in unbelief, and absolutely certain, inconceivably dreadful, must be your perdition. The Divine decree, confirmed by an oath, "the unbeliever shall not enter into my rest," is unrepealed, unrepealable.

But, blessed be God, not less surely established in the heavens is that faithful saying, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER,"—whosoever, though his sins in number be infinite, and in heinousness and aggravation beyond all created power to estimate—whosoever, however frequently he has, in resisting the command to believe, and in refusing the offer of mercy, called God a liar, and trampled under foot equally his authority and his grace —WHOSOEVER "believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." [3]

IV.—THE DESIGN OF HIS SUFFERINGS, "TO BRING MEN TO GOD."

We are now prepared to proceed with our illustration of the apostle's statement of the design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ the just One. They were intended "to bring us,

[1] Heb. x. 26, 27.

[2] 2 Cor. v. 20. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. John i. 29. Acts xiii. 18. 1 Tim. i. 5. John vi. 51. 1 John i. 7. Heb. vii. 25.

[3] John iii. 16.

to conduct us to God.' The phrase, to "bring men to God," is obviously figurative. But, though figurative, it is not obscure. It obviously indicates some change in man's relations and dispositions and actions; his state and character and conduct in reference to God. This change is represented under the image of bringing a person near to another, from whom previously he had been at a distance. Such ideas as distance, nearness, and motion, borrowed from physical objects, must, when applied to moral subjects, be understood figuratively; and such expressions as that before us communicate no real information to the mind, till the idea, stripped of its metaphorical dress, stands before us in its naked reality. Then the figure will be of use in illustrating the thing signified. Till this is done, there is nothing in the mind but a confused jumble of material images and moral truths.

Distance of one person from another, when the phrase is used figuratively, is descriptive of ignorance, enmity, dissimilarity, and non-intercourse; want of acquaintance, want of friendship, want of resemblance, want of fellowship. When men, then, are represented, as they often are in Scripture, as far from God, the meaning is, they are ignorant of his character and will; they are in a state of enmity against him, and the objects of his displeasure; they are very unlike God, indeed, directly opposed to him in the general features of their moral character; and they are estranged from him, having no favorable intercourse and fellowship with him: And when men are said to be brought to God, it is intimated to us that their state and character in reference to God are materially and most beneficially altered; that from a state of ignorance and error, they are brought to the true knowledge of his character and will; that from a state of mutual hostility, they are brought into a state of reconciliation; that from a state of moral dissimilarity, they are brought into a state of moral resemblance; and that from a state of estrangement and non-intercourse, they are brought into a state of habitual and friendly fellowship. You see, then, the meaning of the figurative expression in the text, the bringing men to God; and thus you may clearly perceive the object to which all the succeeding illustrations will be directed—to make it evident to you that the great design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the incarnate Son of God, the appointed Saviour of men, was to lead men to just views of the Divine character and will, to reconcile them to God, to make them like God, and to establish a friendly intercourse between them and God—to show that they have effected this design, and to show, too, how they have effected it. This must be kept steadily in view by all who would wish fully to understand the subsequent part of our illustration of this vitally important subject.

§ 1.—*To bring men to the knowledge of God.*

I observe, then, in the first place, that it was a design of the sufferings of Christ for sins, and in the room of sinners, to bring men to the true knowledge of the character and will of God. In this respect, as indeed in every phase of meaning which belongs to the figurative expression, man was originally *near* God. Man was originally made,

as it has been happily expressed, "receptive of a Deity."[1] He was endowed with faculties capable of apprehending the signatures of divinity impressed on all the works of the Divine hand, whether in creation or providence; and with a disposition to exercise these faculties—a taste for the high and holy satisfaction growing out of the mental contemplation of boundless power, regulated by perfect wisdom and righteousness, and influenced by perfect benignity; and he was moreover blessed with direct communications from heaven of what, in reference to his own relations and duties to God, it was most desirable for him to know. He was made "in God's image, after his likeness;" and we know that that image consists "in knowledge" as well as "in righteousness and holiness."[2]

When Adam sinned, we are not to suppose, that immediately on his transgression he lost, as by a miracle, all such information respecting the Divine character and will as he had previously possessed, or that he was deprived of those rational faculties by which he was made capable of acquiring such information: But becoming an object of the Divine judicial displeasure, necessarily from his becoming a sinner, two things followed, which most materially affected the state of his knowledge; he ceased to be the subject of that holy Divine influence, the communication of which is the strongest manifestation of the Divine favorable regard, which makes those intelligent beings, over whom it exerts its benignant power, count all knowledge worthless in comparison of "the excellent knowledge" of God; and the Divine Being having now become an object of dread and aversion to guilty and depraved man, it must have become a desirable thing with man "not to retain God in his knowledge," to dismiss him as much as possible from his mind, to guard against the entrance of thoughts about Him, as calculated to interfere with his favorite pursuits, to poison his chosen enjoyments.[3]

The natural operation of these two circumstances, would very soon have led to the utter extinction of all true knowledge of God among mankind, even keeping out of view the influence of him who is the prince of darkness, and who, as he led them first away from God, seeks to alienate them from Him more and more, by shutting out the truth respecting God from their minds, and filling them with false views of his character. The religious knowledge of the parents of the human race would soon have been lost. It would in a great measure have died with them; and succeeding generations born ignorant of it, not destitute, indeed, of faculties to acquire it, but placed in circumstances in which they had few facilities for acquiring it; with no supernatural revelation, which, in the supposed case, could not exist; destitute of all inward impulse towards the acquisition of such knowledge, nay, positively indisposed to its pursuit; exposed to a powerful influence, the object of which is to prevent the entrance of such knowledge into the mind, and to produce false views on its subjects—must have been almost entirely unacquainted with, must have become fearfully misinformed in reference to, the Divine character and will. This, I say, would have been the state of all mankind, had things been

[1] Howe.
[2] Gen. i. 27. Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24.
[3] Rom. i. 28. Οὐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν Θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει.

left to their natural, or rather unnatural, course, which, blessed be God, they were not; and even as it is, with all the preventive means He has employed, such is nearly the actual state of a very large portion of the human race, "the nations who know not God:" and, indeed, with regard to every human being, however largely furnished with the means of information, his natural state is a state of ignorance and error respecting the Divine character and will. Now, what is required to bring such men to the knowledge of the truth, on these all-important subjects?

There are obviously two things that are absolutely necessary for this purpose: First, a revelation of the truth with regard to the Divine character and will, couched in intelligible language and attended with sufficient evidence; and, secondly, an influence sufficiently powerful to counteract man's indisposition, man's antipathy, towards such knowledge, and to fix the attention of the mind on this revelation and its evidence, and keep it fixed, till its meaning and authority are so perceived as that it is understood and believed. There is no other conceivable way of communicating the true knowledge of God to a man unacquainted with the Divine character, and indisposed to seek knowledge, strongly disposed to eschew it, but that which I have just described. The revelation is not enough without the influence; nor the influence without the revelation. Both are necessary; and, when they are united, they are sufficient to serve the purpose. Accordingly, we find such is the method which God has adopted, to prevent the utter extinction of all true knowledge of himself in the world, and is employing, to make the true knowledge of himself universal in the world. The revelation of his character and will in the Holy Scriptures, attended by the influence of his Spirit, leading men to understand and believe them, is the grand means of bringing men from darkness to light, from the slavery of Satan to the service of God, by putting them in possession of that eternal life which is implied in the true knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

But some of you are, probably, disposed to say, "All this is very true, and very important; but, apparently, not very much to the purpose. You began with asserting the influence of Christ's penal, vicarious, and expiatory sufferings, on men's being brought to the true knowledge of God; and you have only shown us that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are necessary and sufficient for this purpose." I have not, however, finished my illustration. When I have shown, as I am just about to do, that but for the penal, vicarious, and expiatory sufferings of Christ, there could have been no such Divine revelation, no such Divine influence, as we have been speaking of; it will appear, with sufficient clearness, that ignorant, deluded man's restoration to the knowledge of God, is closely connected with, is necessarily dependent on, those sufferings for sin, in the room of the unjust.

What would have been the situation of mankind in the present state, had the atonement not formed a part of the Divine arrangements, it is not very easy fully and distinctly to bring before the mind; it is, however, very evident, that but for this we could have

had no Bible and no Divine influence to enable us to understand and believe the Bible, and of course we could have had no true knowledge of God. God, in consistency with his moral perfections, can bestow, directly, no spiritual blessing on the objects of his righteous condemnation. Whatever good of this kind he does to man, he does through the mediation of his Son; and whatever he does through the mediation of his Son, he does with a reference to his atoning sacrifice. Had it not been that Christ, as the victim of human guilt, the ransom of human beings, "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world," was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world;" [1] no revelation of the truth respecting the character of Jehovah, as the God of holiness and love, justice and mercy, could ever have reached our earth, nor could a Divine influence have found its way to the heart of condemned, depraved man, to render that revelation effectual.

Indeed, what is the revelation of God which serves this purpose, but the revelation of "his glory in the face of his Son," [2] that is, in his person and in his work? What man needs is "repentance towards God;" [3] a change of mind respecting God. It were endless to detail all the erroneous views of men with regard to the Divine character; but there are two mistakes universally prevalent among men, in their unconverted state, on this subject. They do not believe God to be the holy Being he really is; they do not believe him to be the benignant Being he really is. These were the original false views which the father of lies infused into the mind of man. It is in the atonement of Jesus, the incarnate only begotten of God, that the immaculate holiness and the inconceivable kindness, the inflexible justice and the transcendent mercy, of the Divine Being, are most gloriously and affectingly displayed. That exhibition of the Divine character, forms the great subject of the scriptural revelation. Everything is subordinated to the bringing of this out in strong relief; and it is, indeed, just in proportion as men understand and believe the truth on this subject, that they really know God.

God is not truly known, though we may be acquainted with many of his attributes and works, till he is known as "God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses; seeing he has made him sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." [4] "No man has seen," no man can see, "God; the only begotten of the Father, who was in his bosom, he has declared him." [5] In his work primarily, and then in his word which is the record of his work, he has disclosed the mingled glories of Divine holiness and grace, and the unfathomable depth of Divine wisdom, and the exceeding greatness of Divine power, in the formation and execution of that wondrous scheme, of which his atoning death was, as it were, the foundation and centre. Hence, in the estimation of the apostle, the most direct way of bringing men, sunk in ignorance and error, to the knowledge of God, was to preach Christ, Christ crucified. "Here, shine spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and infinite love, all at once. None of them darkens or eclipses the other: every one of them gives a lustre to the rest.

[1] 1 Pet. i. 20. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [3] Μετάνοια εἰς τὸν Θεόν. Acts xx. 21.
[4] 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. [5] John i. 18.

They mingle their beams, and shine with united eternal splendor; the just Judge, the merciful Father, and the wise Governor. Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound."[1]

And as there could be no such revelation of the Divine character, as is necessary to bring man to a right knowledge of God, without these penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the Son of God; so, without these sufferings, there could have been no such Divine influence as the depravity of man makes necessary to secure that that revelation, however clear and well accredited, shall serve its purpose. It is with a reference to this atonement, that all saving Divine influence is put forth. The Holy Spirit, in his renewing influence, is "shed forth abundantly through Jesus Christ the Saviour;" and redemption from the curse lays the foundation for our receiving "the promised Spirit, through believing."[2]

In order that God may be known by fallen man, there must be a revelation of God, a suitable revelation of God. The giving of that revelation goes on the supposition that God has been propitiated by an atonement; and the atonement by which God is propitiated is the great subject of the revelation; and makes it what it is, a revelation fitted to give fallen men just views of the Divine character. To the knowledge of God by fallen man, a Divine influence is necessary to dispose him to receive, to make him understand and believe, this revelation; and, but for the sufferings of Jesus Christ, no such influence could have been put forth. Thus, we trust, we have made it clear to the understandings of all, that to lead men into the knowledge of the Divine character, by a revelation, not only confirmed, but merited, by his sufferings, and which is a revelation of God, chiefly, because it is an account of those sufferings, in which the character of God is unfolded; and by a Divine influence, not only dispensed, but procured by him, is one design which the Saviour had in view when, according to the benignant good pleasure of his Father, He, as the just One, suffered for sins in the room of the unjust.

On allowing the mind to rest on such views, the reflection naturally rises, how highly should we value our Bibles! How highly should we value them, when we think what they have cost! How highly should we value them, when we think what they contain! How highly should we value them, when we think what end they are intended and fitted to serve!

How much have our Bibles cost! They have not cost us much. Though there once was a time, when, even in this country, a single copy of the Scriptures was a possession to which only the wealthy and noble could aspire;[3] yet ever since any of us can recollect, the Bible was to be obtained at a moderate price, and we have great cause to rejoice that, now, the best of books, is the cheapest of books.[4] If any one in our country is without a Bible, the reason must be

[1] M'Laurin. [2] Tit. iii. 5, 6. Gal. iii. 13, 14.

[3] In England, in 1274, the price of a Bible, with a commentary, fairly written, was £30; the equivalent of fifteen years' work for a laborer, whose wages were then 1½*d.* a-day. In 1429, Wiclif's New Testament sold for £2, 16*s.* 8*d.*, equal to £30 of our money.—*Le Bas' Wiclif*—and *Townley's Biblical Anecdotes.*

[4] See note B.

sought somewhere else than in the scarceness or the dearness of the inspired volume. Yet the Bible, which costs us so little, cost some very dear, through whose instrumentality it comes to us. Our English Bible cost William Tyndale his life; and many others bonds and imprisonments. Indeed it were difficult to estimate the amount of labor and suffering which our English Bible has cost;[1] still more difficult to estimate the expense of toil and sacrifice at which, since the beginning, the preservation and transmission of the sacred books have been secured. All these considerations go to enhance the value of our Bibles; but they are all as nothing in comparison with the consideration which the subject of our discourse brings before the mind. Looking at our Bibles, we may well say, "They were not gotten for gold, neither was silver weighed for their price. They cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. No mention shall be made of the coral, or pearls; for their price is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them, neither can they be valued with fine gold."[2] They were not purchased for us by "such corruptible things as silver and gold;" nay, not by such things even as the travail of men's minds, or the sacrifice of men's lives, but "by precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—the blood of Christ." Our Bibles are blood-bought Bibles! Surely, then, we should value them, and show our value for them by rightly using them. He who neglects the Bible pours contempt on the blood of the incarnate Son of God.

Our regard to the Bible should be strengthened by the consideration of what it contains. It is the record of those sufferings of which it is one of the many precious results. It tells us, of what it never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive, that He who was "God, manifest in the flesh," died, died as a victim, in our room, for our salvation. It tells us how He who was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself; took on him the nature of a man, the form of a servant, the likeness of a sinner; and having had our sins made to meet on him, became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. What are the events of history, what are the wonders of nature, what are the inventions of art, what are the discoveries of research, what are the demonstrations of science, compared with this! "Into these things angels desire to look;"[3] and shall we, we who have so much deeper an interest in them, turn away from them with indifference or disgust?

Another consideration calculated to increase our regard to our Bible, which our subject brings before the mind, is the end for which it is designed. It is the design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ, by means of the Bible, to bring us to God; to make us acquainted with him, "whom to know is life eternal;" and acquaintance with whom is at once necessary and sufficient to secure true peace to the mind; to restore us to his favor, "whose favor is life, and whose

[1] My ancient and much esteemed friend, the Rev. Christopher Anderson, in his elaborate and valuable "Annals of the English Bible, from 1524 to 1844," has, at a great expense of time and toil, furnished British Christians with the means of forming a just judgment on the topics referred to in the text; and they will not act with wisdom and gratitude if they do not avail themselves of these means.

[2] Job xxviii. 15–19. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. [3] 1 Pet. i. 12.

loving-kindness is better than life;" to conform us to his image, who is the perfection of intellectual and moral beauty; and to introduce us to intercourse with him, whose fellowship is the highest honor, and the highest blessedness, of the highest order of intellectual beings. Let us then value our Bibles; we cannot overvalue them. Let us show our sense of their worth by applying them to the purpose for which they have been given to us; and let us show our love to our fellow-men, by exerting ourselves, that all of them may be put in possession of a gift so costly and so advantageous.

The same considerations which should lead us to value the Divine word, should lead us to value the Divine influence. Both are necessary to our salvation. Neither could have been ours, but for the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the Son of God. Let those of us who have obtained the Spirit through believing, "having obeyed the truth by the Spirit," seek larger measures of his influence for ourselves. We obtained it when we were not seeking it: when from our ignorance and unbelief we could not seek it; but, now that we know its reality and its value, let us seek a more abundant effusion of it. Jesus has died, Jesus has been glorified, that the Spirit may be poured down from on high. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall our Father in heaven give good gifts, give his Holy Spirit, to them who ask him?" And let us not confine our prayers to ourselves, but extend them to those who are yet "sensual, and have not the Spirit." Let us say, "Come from the four winds, O Spirit of the Lord, and breathe upon these dead bones, that they may live."[1] He could, He alone could, bring us to God. He can, He alone can, bring them to God. Let us bless the Son, to whose meritorious sufferings we owe the word of life, and the Spirit of life; and let us bless the Father, to whom we owe the Son, and all the blessings he procures and bestows; in bringing us back to him, in drawing nearer and nearer to whom, through eternal ages, consists "the whole" of man,[2] the whole of his holiness, honor, and happiness.

The subject we have been considering naturally suggests an important question in which we all have a very deep interest. Has this end of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ, the bringing of men to the true knowledge of God,—has this end been answered in us as individuals? Have we thus been brought to God? Do we know God? Do we really understand and believe the truth with regard to the Divine character? This is far from being a common attainment, even in this nominally christian country. It is far from being a universal attainment, even among members of christian churches. Many are called by the name of the true God. Many externally call on that name who do not know it; who are entire strangers to that knowledge of the only true God, which is eternal life. No man has this knowledge naturally. No man can acquire it without Divine teaching. Brother may say to brother, know the

[1] Luke xi. 9–13. Ezek. xxxvii. 9. [2] Eccles. xii. 13.

Lord; but the knowledge of God is "a good gift that cometh down from above." "The Lord giveth" this "wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."[1] Are we in possession of this knowledge of God, this knowledge which brings us near God, which makes us habitually dwell as in his presence? He who thus knows God, trusts in him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."[2] He that knows God as he ought, loves God. He who knows God follows on to know him, "counting all things loss" in comparison of this excellent knowledge; yet "not counting himself to have attained, neither to be already perfect," but "following after to apprehend that for which also he has been apprehended of God." He that knows God is "strong, and does exploits" in the spiritual warfare. He who is thus acquainted with God, is "at peace," at peace with God, at peace with himself, at peace with all the world. He who knows God is transformed by his knowledge, "changed into the same image from glory to glory."[3] Are we in possession of this knowledge? And is it in the school of the cross that we have learned it? Are the penal, vicarious expiatory, sufferings, the mirror in which we, with open face, have seen the unveiled glories of the Divine character?

If this is indeed the case, happy are we. We "walk in the light of his countenance;" we "rejoice in his name all the day," and we "are exalted in his righteousness." We are near him, and we shall yet be nearer him. "We know in part;" ere long "we shall know even as we are known." We shall be brought very near him, even to the light which is his dwelling-place, "and in his light we shall see light."[4]

But if we have not been thus brought to God, by being made truly to understand, really to believe, the truth respecting him, especially as manifested in the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of his incarnate Son; though in words we should profess to know Him, living and dying in these circumstances, we shall find our place among "them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." And we know that when He comes, it will be "in flaming fire, to take vengeance" on all such. To those who never knew him in truth, though they professed to know him, he will say, "I never knew you: depart from me."[5] And then they shall never, never, know God, but as a God of righteous vengeance; never so know Him, as to have life eternal in the knowledge of Him. Far from him now, they shall everlastingly go farther and farther from the light of life into the blackness of darkness, never to find their way back to Him, the Sun of the universe, the Fountain of knowledge, purity, and happiness. But now they may. To them who are farthest from Him in ignorance, and in error; and in alienation through that ignorance and error that are in them, God still proclaims, "Acquaint yourself now with ME, and be at peace." "No man hath seen," no man can see me; but "The Only-Begotten has declared" me. "He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father." Look to Jesus, then,

[1] Prov. ii. 6. [2] Psal. ix. 10. [3] Phil. iii. 3–12. Job xxii. 21. 2 Cor. iii. 18.
[4] Psal. lxxxix. 15–17. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Psal. xxxvi. 9.
[5] 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. Matt. vii. 23.

if you would know God. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity; how long, ye fools, will ye hate knowledge?" "Turn ye at his reproof; behold, he will pour out his Spirit unto you, he will make known his words to you," he will give you "an understanding heart," and "ye shall know he is the Lord."[1]

§ 2.—*To bring men to favor with God.*

A second view of the object of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ is, that they were designed to bring men from a state of enmity into a state of reconciliation with God. The original state of man, in reference to God, was one of cordial friendship. It was the state of a dutiful child in the well-regulated family of a wise and affectionate parent; it was the state of a loyal subject under the government of a wise and benevolent prince; the happiness of the child was in accordance with, and secured by, the good order of the family: the happiness of the subject was accordant with, and secured by, the good government of the state. The Father, the Sovereign, regarded the dutiful child and subject with complacent approbation and kindness; and the dutiful child and subject regarded the wise, and righteous, and benignant, Father and Sovereign with veneration, love, and confidence.

The introduction of sin necessarily revolutionized all this. The order of the family made it necessary that the undutiful child's conduct should be distinctly marked with the Father's displeasure. The well-being of the community made it necessary that the rebel subject should be adequately punished. Man, when he became a sinner, became, necessarily became, the object of the judicial displeasure, and of the moral disapprobation of God. His happiness became opposed to the honor of the Divine character, and to the stability and well-being of the Divine government. No change took place in God. He is Jehovah; he cannot change. He is "the Father of lights; with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The change had taken place in man; and his changed, moral state, necessarily produced a change in his moral relations to the unchanged One; produced such a change just because He was the unchanged, the unchangeable, One. Had there been no such change, God must have changed; he must have ceased to be holy and just, to love righteousness, and to hate iniquity. Man, the safe, happy child and subject, has thus become the disowned outcast, the condemned rebel; and dislike, suspicion, and fear, have in his heart taken the place of affectionate esteem and humble confidence.

Thus man, the sinner, in both these respects, is far from God; and the natural course of things is, that he should go farther and farther from God, sink deeper and deeper in guilt, become more and more hardened in alienation and enmity. "God is," and cannot but be, "angry with the wicked every day." "He will," he can, "by no means clear the guilty."[2] If the sinner *will* continue to break the holy, just, and good law, that holy, just, and good law *must* continue

[1] Job xxii. 21. John i. 18; xiv. 9. Prov. i. 22, 23. Jer. xxiv. 7.
[2] Psal. vii. 11. Exod. xxxiv. 6.

to sentence him to merited adequate punishment. God cannot deny himself. His will, his nature, cannot change with man's wayward inclinations. And the sinner becomes every day, by the indulgence of forbidden dispositions, and the perpetration of forbidden crimes, more and more an alien and an enemy. He knows God is displeased with him, and that He has reason to be so. He hates the law, which he cannot but abstractly approve; and he regards the Author and Executor of that law with mingled fear and aversion. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." [1]

The inquiry, Is it a possible thing that man, in this aspect of his moral state and religious relations, as far from God, should be brought near to him? is a question which, if proposed to the unfallen angels, would certainly not have been answered in the affirmative. With their high adoring sentiments of the unfathomable wisdom, and unbounded power, and infinite benignity, of God, they would not have, with the rashness men often manifest in treating similar questions, pronounced such a consummation absolutely impossible. But the probabilities must have appeared to them fearfully against it. The angels who sinned perished irremediably. Would he who spared not sinning angels, ministers of light, spare sinning men, the children of the dust? And how could he spare them, without tampering with justice, and violating faithfulness? If it be possible, it must be in some way which reconciles apparent incompatibilities; for God cannot deny himself. Had the question been proposed to those wise and holy beings, their reply would probably have been, "O Lord, THOU knowest:" and had it then been announced to them that the event was not only possible, but certain; and that in the depth of the Divine councils lay a plan for its accomplishment; and had they been called to conjecture what were the means which God had devised, that "his banished should not be expelled from him," [2] they would have been as much at a loss as ever. They would have answered, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: it is high, we cannot attain to it." Most certain it is that the truth could never have entered into their mind, that this end was to be gained by the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the Only-Begotten of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Yet so it is; and though this method of bringing God and man into a state of reconciliation, could never have suggested itself to the mind of man or angel, yet now that it has been developed in the incarnation, and life, and death, and resurrection, and exaltation, of the divine Saviour, as described in the word of the truth of the gospel, we cannot help perceiving how admirably fitted it is to accomplish its mighty purposes, in making the pardon and salvation of man consistent with the perfections of the Divine character, and the principles of the Divine government in destroying the natural enmity of the depraved human heart, and in again making God and man the objects of most complacent mutual regards.

We do not here ask what was necessary to make God willing that self-ruined man should be ultimately happy. Nothing was necessary to this but his essential infinite benignity. He has "no pleasure in

[1] Rom. viii. 7. [2] 2 Sam. xiv. 14.

the death of him that dieth."[1] Should the whole sinning universe perish, it is not for want of love in him who is love. The question here is, what could reconcile the exercise of mercy to man with the claims of the Divine justice, with the declarations of the Divine law, with the stability of the Divine government, with the well-being of the great moral family of God? It was necessary that something should be done which would place the excellence of the Divine law which had been violated, in a point of view, at all events, no less clear than the unswerving obedience of the human race as unfallen, or the everlasting destruction of the human race as fallen, would have done. To all created wisdom, it must have appeared a hopeless inquiry, What can do this?

Yet this has been accomplished, fully accomplished, by the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the incarnate Son of God. He who was "in the form of God" became a man; was "made under the law" which man had violated; had the iniquities of man laid on him by the Supreme Judge; yielded an obedience to the law, absolutely perfect as to principle, extent, and continuance; "was made a curse" for man; endured the very evils which are the manifestation of the displeasure of God against man's sin, the result of his violation of the holy, just, and good law; and became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. The law was more honored in the obedience of its precepts, and endurance of its sanctions by him, who is "God manifest in the flesh," than it had been dishonored by the sin of man. "The Lord was well pleased for his righteousness' sake," because by it "he magnified the law, and made it honorable." He "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He "finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness."[2] On the ground of what he has done and suffered, the just in the room of the unjust, the just God is the justifier of the ungodly believing in him. It has become a righteous thing with God to forgive the sin and save the sinner.[3] Thus we see how the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord, make the pardon of sin and the salvation of sinners consistent with the perfection of the Divine character, and the principles of the Divine government.

But the atonement is intended and fitted not only to remove the judicial displeasure, but the moral disapprobation, of God from those who are interested in its saving efficacy. By the atonement, according to the arrangements of the "covenant ordered in all things and sure," is secured to the chosen of God the communication of that Divine influence which is necessary to transform the character, and make him, who is the proper object of God's moral disapprobation, the object of his holy complacency. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, that we might receive not only 'the blessing of Abraham,' a free and full justification by faith, but also that we might receive the promised Spirit by believing."[4] And still farther, it is the exhibition of the Divine character, made in the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ, as this is brought before the mind in a plain, well-accredited revelation, that is the grand instrument, in the

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 11.
[2] Isa. xlii. 21. Heb. ix. 26. Dan. ix. 24.
[3] 1 John i. 9.
[4] Gal. iii. 14, 15.

hand of the Divine Spirit, in creating men anew in Christ Jesus unto good works; in bringing them into a mode of thinking, and feeling, and acting, that is in accordance with his mind and will, and therefore the object of his complacent approbation. As the restoration of man to the friendship of God, in the sense of his becoming the object of the Divine moral complacency, is the result of his restoration to the image of God, it is enough to have generally referred to the subject here. Its more full illustration will naturally come to be attended to under some of the subsequent divisions of our subject.

It is time now that we observe, that the reconciliation between God and man must be mutual. The sinner's enmity against God must be removed, as well as God's judicial displeasure, against the sinner; and, while God regards the saved sinner with complacent approbation, he must be made to cherish reciprocal affections of supreme veneration, esteem, love, and confidence, towards God. The penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord are intended, are calculated, and are found in fact to be effectual, for gaining these ends. Man was led away from God by the suspicion, infused into his mind by the father of lies, that God did not wish to make him as happy as he might be; that by the commands and threatenings of his law he threw obstructions in the way of his being free and happy; and now, in his guilty and depraved state, the knowledge that God condemns him on account of sin, and the deep feeling that the requisitions of his law, though just, are in direct opposition to the strongest propensities of his nature, lead him to regard God with settled aversion. Nothing can change this state of mind but a just view of the Divine character, especially of the holy benignity of that character. I must know and believe the love of God, before I can cordially love him. I must see him to be lovely, I must see him to be kind. No manifestation of the Divine character will serve this purpose, but that which is made in the atonement of Christ. There is no power but the power of Christ's death which can bring home a human heart to God. "Common mercies of God, though they have a *leading* faculty to repentance, yet the rebellious heart will not be led by them. The judgments of God, public or personal, though they should drive us to God, yet the heart unchanged runs the farther from him. Do we not see it by ourselves and other sinners about us? They look not at all towards him that smites, much less do they return; or if any more serious thoughts of returning arise upon the surprise of an affliction, how soon do they vanish; either the stroke abating, or the heart by time growing hard and senseless under it. Indeed, where it is renewed and brought in by Christ, then all other things have a sanctifying influence, according to their quality, to stir up a Christian to seek after fuller communion, closer walk, and nearer access to God. But leave out Christ, Christ crucified, and all other means work not this way: neither the works nor the word of God sounded in his ear, 'Return, return,' will bring him near. Let the rod speak too, to make the cry louder, still the wicked will do wickedly; will not hearken to the voice of God; will not see the hand of God, though lifted up; will not be persuaded to lay aside enmity, or seek for reconciliation."[1] No, till they are

[1] Leighton.

made to see HIM on the cross as a high altar, "lifted up," as the victim of human guilt, bearing and bearing away the sins of the world, they will never be drawn to God. Whenever they are made in the faith of the truth to see, that "in this was manifested the love of God, in that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that," through his being the propitiation for our sins, "we should live through him," then, and not till then, they learn to "love him who first loved them," who thus loved them.[1] They cannot doubt the kindness of Him, who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him" up as a sacrifice in their room. The weapons of rebellion drop out of their hand, the jealousies of guilt are banished from their heart; and as enmity is destroyed by the view of the Divine character given in the atonement, when apprehended in the faith of the truth: so it is principally by the same exhibition of the Divine character, being brought more fully and kept habitually before the mind, that all the holy affections of Divine friendship on the part of the reconciled sinner, are excited and strengthened so as to become leading constituents of the character, every-day principles of action.

Our illustration of this part of the subject would be defective, did we not add that the destruction of the enmity, and the cultivation of this holy friendship, is not only effected chiefly by the instrumentality of the faith of the truth respecting the penal, vicarious, expiatory death of Christ; but as we have already had occasion to remark, that that Divine influence which gives to this instrumentality all its efficacy, is an influence which never could have found its way to the corrupted human heart, but for the atonement of Christ, and the communication of which to all the chosen of God is secured by that atonement.

Let us here again pause for a little, and inquire, Have we *thus* been brought to God? Have we from a state of hostility been brought into a state of reconciliation? The question is not, has an atonement which lies at the foundation of a reconciliation been made? That is beyond all question. The substance of all the typical shadows of the legal atonement is to be found in the sacrifice of Christ: "Christ, our paschal lamb," "the lamb of God," "has been sacrificed for us." There is no need of asking if that sacrifice of atonement be an adequate one. "If the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself to God without spot, purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" The only fit judge of its adequacy has most explicitly declared his satisfaction with it, by raising the self-devoted victim from the dust of earth, and setting him on the throne of the universe, "giving him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God."[2] The seventy weeks have long ago been accomplished; and reconciliation has been made for iniquity, by full satisfaction being yielded to the requisitions of the offended justice and violated law of God.

There is no need of asking if this reconciliation be intended for me. Who shall enjoy the saving results of this reconciliation is

[1] 1 John iv. 9, 19. [2] 1 Cor. v. 7. Heb. ix. 13, 14. 1 Pet. i. 21.

known only to God, can be known only to God, except in the case of those who make their election sure by making sure their calling, who by accepting the reconciliation, obtain experimental evidence that they are reconciled. But nothing is plainer than that this reconciliation, and the blessings flowing from it, were intended to be, and are in fact, freely offered to all who hear the gospel; and who that knows anything of the character of him who makes the offer, dare express or even harbor a doubt as to that offer being a most sincere and unequivocal one? The satisfaction made was perfect satisfaction. The law could demand no more. The atonement is an infinite atonement: Christ, the incarnate, only begotten, suffered for sin, the just One in the room of the unjust. For every human being, then, however guilty and depraved, to whom the gospel comes, there is reconciliation through Christ, if he will but gladly and gratefully receive what is freely given him of God.

Men have foolishly and impiously made questions on these points; but there is no room, blessed be God that it is so! no room for rational doubts here. If there were, where, O where, were the hopes of any of the children of men? Were not an all-perfect atonement, a complete reconciliation in the word of the truth of the gospel, held out for the acceptance of "mankind-sinners as such," as our fathers of the Secession loved to say, that gospel would be anything rather than "glad tidings of great joy to all people." Yes, "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."[1]

But it is a question, and a most important one,—let us, every one of us, endeavor to resolve it in reference to himself,—Have we "received the reconciliation?"[2] It is absolutely certain that Christ has "made peace by the blood of his cross;" but have we through this pacification, as individuals, been brought into a state of peace with God? Have we reason to believe that the blood of our paschal Lamb has been so sprinkled on us, as that the destroying angel shall not touch us? Have we reason to believe that we are delivered from the curse through him having been made a curse for us? We are, questionless, in this most desirable state, if we have believed the truth as it is in Jesus. And with equal certainty may it be affirmed, we are not in this state if we have not believed the truth as it is in Jesus: "He that believeth in him is not condemned; he shall never come into condemnation: he that believeth not is condemned already," and, continuing an unbeliever, "the wrath of God abideth on him."[3]

But how am I to know, if I believe the truth, the faith of which savingly interests me in the reconciling efficacy of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ? To this question many satisfactory answers might be given, affording the individual the means of resolving the awfully important question; but I content myself with that which grows out of our subject. If you are in your minds no more enemies to God through wicked works, but, on the contrary, have his love shed abroad in your hearts; if you love God, and love him just because he is God—that is, holy love, infinitely excellent,

[1] 2 Cor. v. 21. [2] Col. i. 20. [3] John iii. 18, 36.

infinitely kind; if you cordially acquiesce in, if you supremely approve and admire, the Divine method of salvation, "grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life;" [1] if you are reconciled to the Divine law, accounting it in all things to be right, "holy, just, and good;" esteeming entire conformity to it, as exemplified in the character and conduct of our Lord, as your highest honor and happiness, as well as duty; if you are reconciled to the Divine providential arrangements, however opposite to your natural inclinations, saying, "Good is the will of the Lord," Lord, what thou wilt, when thou wilt, how thou wilt; if there is a distinctly begun and steadily progressive conformity of your mind and will to the mind and will of God, then have you reason to conclude, not only that reconciliation has been made for iniquity, but that you have received that reconciliation.

And if we have thus received the reconciliation, what a debt of gratitude do we owe to Him who has reconciled us to himself by Christ Jesus—to Christ Jesus who hath thus brought us to God—and to the good Spirit, who in our case has rendered the ministration of reconciliation effectual, and has saved us from the fearful consequences of receiving this grace of God in vain. Let this gratitude manifest itself in leading us habitually to cherish the sentiments and pursue the conduct which becomes us as restored prodigal children, pardoned rebel subjects. Let us, constrained "by the mercies of God, present ourselves to Him as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service, our rational worship." Let us serve him without fear, "in righteousness and holiness, all the days of our lives;" "walking at liberty, keeping his commandments;" serving him in the newness of the Spirit, and "not in the oldness of the letter;" making it evident, from the manner in which we do and suffer his will, that we are not slaves, but sons; that "we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, making us cry Abba, Father." Let us show that we really do "know the joyful sound, by walking in the light of the Divine countenance, rejoicing in God's name all the day, being exalted in his righteousness." [2]

If there be any here who have not received the reconciliation, what shall I say to them? I cannot bid them hope, remaining in their present circumstances. No; there is, there can be, neither happiness nor hope in a state of enmity with God. I might represent to them the horrors of their condition, the still greater horrors of their prospects, and expostulate with them on the shocking unnaturalness as well as inconceivable sinfulness of their conduct, in being enemies of the most excellent and amiable and benignant of beings. But, instead of doing this, I shall at once urge them to "lay hold on the hope that is set before, even them, in the gospel." To the human being within these walls most characterized by enmity against God, most under the influence of the carnal mind, God is now proclaiming, "Acquaint thyself with ME, and be at peace; so shall good come to thee." Behold me! Behold me! I am glorious in holiness; but I am rich in mercy. I can by no means clear the guilty; but I have set forth

[1] Rom. v. 21.
[2] Rom. xii. 1. Luke i. 74, 75. Psal. cxix. 45. Rom. vii. 6; viii. 15. Psal. lxxxix 15, 16.

Christ Jesus a propitiation, through faith in his blood. I am a just God; but I am the Saviour. I am just; but I am the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him who dieth. Return to me; I have redeemed you. Return, return. I, even I, am he who blotteth out your transgression for my own sake, and I will not remember your sin. Be reconciled to God. Oh, be persuaded, that remaining far from him you must perish! Oh, be persuaded, that it is good for you to draw near to God![1]

And say not, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Who shall bring me near before him? How can I stand before thee, Holy Lord God? Behold one like the Son of Man, but in reality the Son of God; yet your brother, your kinsman-Redeemer. He has "engaged his heart to approach to Jehovah" in your name, and has opened a way by which you may come into his favorable presence. Hear him proclaiming, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man can come to the Father but by me." "His blood cleanseth us from all sin." He is "able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" and "him that comes to him he will in nowise cast out." He is "the power of God unto salvation." He is "the arm," "the strength of Jehovah." Lay hold of him, and "make peace with Jehovah, and he will make peace with you." Receive the message of mercy, and you will find that he is "pacified towards you for all the iniquities which you have done;" that he is waiting to be gracious, and ready to bless you "with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus."[2] Persist in your enmity, and you are undone, utterly undone, undone forever.

§ 3.—*To bring men to likeness to God.*

I proceed now to remark, in the third place, that it was a design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ to bring men from a state of moral dissimilarity into a state of moral resemblance to God. Man in his primeval state, as he had just views of the Divine character and will, and enjoyed the favor of God, regarding him with sentiments of supreme veneration, confidence, and love; was also, in the great lineaments of his moral character, assimilated to God. "God created man in his own image, in the likeness of God created he him;" and we know that image consists "in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness."[3] His mind was in entire accordance with the mind of God; his will with the will of God, so far as they were made known to him. He had no views inconsistent with the mind of God, which is truth; no inclinations opposed to the will of God, which is righteousness.

It is altogether otherwise with man the sinner. He is not only ignorant of God, and in a state of enmity with him; but the whole frame of his sentiments and feelings is in direct contrariety to the

[1] Heb. vi 18. Job xxii. 21. Exod. xv. 11. Eph. ii. 4. Exod. xxxiv. 7. Rom. iii. 25. Isa. xlv. 21. Rom. iii. 27. Ezek. xviii. 32; xxxiii. 11. Isa. xliv. 22; xliii. 25. 2 Cor. v. 20. Psal. lxxiii. 27, 28.

[2] Micah vi. 6. 1 Sam. vi. 20. Jer. xxx. 21. John xiv. 6. 1 John i. 7. Heb. vii. 25. John vi. 37. Isa. xxvii. 5. Ezek. xvi. 63. Eph. i. 3.

[3] Gen. i. 27. Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10.

Divine mind and will; he being the image, not of his Father in heaven, but of his fallen earthly father. "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all;" but "the eyes of the understanding" of unregenerate man "are darkened"—nay, he is "darkness," by ignorance alienated from, opposed to, God. "God is love," but mankind are "hateful," "full of hatred," hating God, and hating each other. God is holy, but they are unholy. God is true and faithful, but they are the children of him who is a liar as well as a murderer from the beginning.[1] And this opposition of character is manifested in the conduct of unregenerate men. They are continually engaged in an attempt to counterwork God, following a rule, seeking an end, entirely different from, entirely irreconcilable with, the rule and end of him, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things."

It is the purpose of God from among the ruins of the fall to create anew a "peculiar people," to form a people for himself, that they may show forth his praise. It is his design to restore in them that moral image of himself which sin has defaced; and the grand means for gaining this end are the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of his own Son.

That the atonement was intended to secure, and has indeed secured, to all who are by faith interested in its saving efficacy, sanctification as well as justification, restoration to the Divine image as well as to the Divine favor, is a doctrine very clearly revealed in Scripture. "God condemned sin in the flesh, by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin"—that is, as a sacrifice for sin. God thus condemned sin, "which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh;" and the consequence is, "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us believers, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."[2] "Our old man was crucified with Christ, that we should no longer be the slaves of sin."[3] "For this cause," says the Saviour, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth."[4] "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."[5] "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for her; that he might sanctify and cleanse her by the washing of water through the word; that he might present her to himself a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."[6] "Ye know that ye were not redeemed by such corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot. He his own self bare our sins in his own body on, or rather to, the tree, that we, being dead to sin, might live to righteousness."[7] There can be no doubt of the fact, then: but how the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ were necessary for, how they are effectual to, the gaining this end, is an important and interesting subject of inquiry. To understand in theory the influence of the atonement on sanctification, is no inconsiderable attainment in christian theology; to know it in experience, is the very essence of christian godliness.

[1] 1 John i. 5. Rom. i. 21. Eph. iv. 18; v. 8. John viii. 44.
[2] Rom. viii. 3, 4.
[3] Rom. vi. 6.
[4] John xvii. 19.
[5] Tit. ii. 14.
[6] Eph. iv. 25–27.
[7] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; ii. 24.

In the few observations I am about to make on the subject, I shall endeavor equally to avoid rash speculation as to the mode of the efficacy of the atonement, an "intruding into those things which men have not seen," cannot see, for God has not revealed them; and that "voluntary humility" which prevents an explicit avowal of what Scripture does reveal, from a fear of opposing the prejudices, or exciting the dislike, of the wise men of this world. The whole truth, we apprehend, on the subject may be stated in the three following propositions. By the atonement, as satisfaction to Divine justice for sin, and the meritorious ground of the Redeemer's exaltation, obstacles, otherwise insurmountable, are removed out of the way of the sinner being restored to the Divine image; by the atonement, in connection with covenant engagements, or the purpose of mercy, the communication of a Divine influence, necessary and sufficient for this purpose, is secured; and by the atonement, as the subject of a Divine revelation, an appropriate instrumentality is furnished for accomplishing this end.

The condemning sentence of the Divine law was one obstacle in the way of the restoration of the Divine image, insurmountable by all human, all created means. No man, no angel, could make satisfaction to Divine justice for sinful man. Till this is made, it consists not with the wisdom, holiness, justice, and faithfulness of God, to bestow on the sinner that sanctifying influence, the communication of which to any created being, is the highest proof that he is the object of the kind regard of Him who confers it. Christ giving himself for us as a sacrifice, according to the benignant will of his Father, by which the law was magnified and made honorable, makes it a righteous thing for God to give us, through him and for his sake, all good things; and among these good things, that greatest of all spiritual blessings, being indeed the sum and substance of them all, the good, sanctifying, transforming Spirit.

The power of Satan is another obstacle in the way of the restoration of the sinner to holiness, in restoration to the image of God, an obstacle which no created agency could have removed. That power is destroyed, and could only have been destroyed, by our Lord, the stronger Man, who "enters the house of the strong man and spoils him of his goods." This work is accomplished in the exercise of Christ's mediatorial power and authority. That power and authority were conferred on him as the reward of that obedience unto death, in which he accomplished the work of atonement. Christ, the just One, having suffered to death for sins in the room of sinners, went to heaven, sat down on the right hand of God, principalities and powers, fallen and unfallen, being put under him, so that the prey may now be taken from the mighty, and the captive of the terrible one be delivered.

But this is not all. By the atonement, in connection with the purpose of mercy, is secured, to all the chosen of God, the communication of that Divine influence which is at once absolutely necessary, and completely sufficient, to restore man to the Divine image. Such an influence is absolutely necessary to the production of true holiness in the human heart. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." "We

are sanctified by the Spirit of our God."[1] The connection of the communication of the Spirit with the atonement, is stated in such passages as the following:—"The Spirit was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified." "It is expedient that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I go away I will send him." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith." The Spirit is the Spirit of faith, and "it is given" to men "on the behalf of Christ, to believe in his name." It belongs to him as the perfected Captain of our salvation, the Prince and the Saviour, in virtue of the promises made before the world began, to "give" to his redeemed ones "repentance," the new mind, just another word for the restored image of God, as well as "the remission of sins."[2]

Finally, by the atonement securing the scriptural revelation of the Divine character and will, and being itself, indeed, the great subject of that revelation, an appropriate instrumentality is furnished for the sanctification of man, or, in other words, bringing him to God, by restoring him to the Divine image. It is by the truth about God, known and believed, that men are conformed to God's image. They are "sanctified by the truth." They "are transformed by the renewing of the mind."[3] In a former part of this discourse, I showed how, without the atonement, no such revelation of the Divine character as would transform man could have been given to man. The view given us of the character and will of God in the atonement, the great subject of Divine revelation, is such as, just in the degree in which it is apprehended in its meaning and evidence, just in the degree in which it is understood and believed, must conform us to God. "He gave himself for his church, that he might purify and cleanse her by the word;"[4] of which word, his giving himself is the great subject; and it is this which gives it its aptitude for cleansing and renewing the human heart. "Let any person," it has been justly said, "be brought to understand correctly, and to believe cordially, that part of the Divine testimony; as a necessary consequence his soul must experience a most momentous moral transformation. He will learn to love God, and to confide in him, as his reconciled Father; he will feel emotions of unfeigned and fervent gratitude for such a marvellous manifestation of kindness; and he will feel sincerely desirous to testify his gratitude, by putting on that moral image of God, which in absolute perfection was manifested in his incarnate Son, now seen and felt to be the beauty and dignity of the soul, and by obeying the Divine law, which he now sees and feels to be indeed 'holy, just, and good.'"

§ 4.—*To bring men to fellowship with God.*

I proceed now to remark, in the fourth place, that the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ, were designed to bring men

[1] John vi. 63. 1 Cor. vi. 11.
[2] John vii. 39; xvi. 7. Gal. iii. 13, 14. Phil. i. 29. Acts v. 31.
[3] John xvii. 17. Rom. xii. 2. [4] Eph. v. 26.

from a state of alienation and non-intercourse, into a state of habitual, favorable fellowship with God. Fellowship with God is a phrase to which, I am afraid, many attach very indefinite, confused, incorrect ideas. The term fellowship indicates either common possession or mutual intercourse. In the first sense, fellowship with God means the thinking, willing, choosing, and enjoying in common with God, and is in fact just what we have been speaking of under the name of conformity to God's image. In the second sense, fellowship with God means intercourse with God; interchange of thoughts and sentiments; intercourse maintained on his part by his communication of gracious influence and saving blessings; and, on the part of man, by the exercise of devout affections.

When the Christian is enabled firmly to believe the truth as it is in Jesus, confidently to rely on the Saviour, humbly to hope for the grace that is to be brought to him at the coming of our Lord Jesus, patiently to bear affliction, triumphantly to conquer temptation, it is in consequence of Divine communications. Good and perfect gifts come down to him from above; and the reception of these gifts draws out from the heart of the Christian holy aspirations of gratitude and desire, which find their expression in thanksgiving and prayer. These bring down new supplies of celestial influence; and these influences, in their turn, excite more enlarged wishes for spiritual blessings, stimulating the very appetite which they gratify. There is thus an ever-growing interchange of influences and desires, and of prayers and blessings.[1] This is the sense in which we use the word fellowship with God in the present remarks.

Man, in his original condition, lived in this state of intercourse with God. Adam, as well as Enoch, "walked with God;" and though we have but a few fragments of paradisaical history, we cannot doubt that, still more than in the case of Moses, God spake to Adam "as a man to his friend." Sin interrupted this intercourse. Man's guilt made it inconsistent with God's holiness, and justice, and truth, to have intercourse with man as his friend; and man's depravity equally unfitted and indisposed him for acceptable intercourse with God. The language of the human heart in its unchanged state is, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "What have I to do with thee, thou Holy One?"

To re-open this intercourse, and to lay a foundation for its permanent maintenance, is one great purpose of the atonement of our Lord. And it is obviously well fitted to gain this object. It has gained it in the case of all who, through believing, have obtained a personal interest in its saving effects.

We have already, in effect, shown how this is accomplished. It is by producing reconciliation and resemblance that the atonement opens up the way for communion. "Between parties at variance, there can be no agreeable or affectionate intercourse without reconciliation. Between persons whose principles and tastes, whose dispositions and pursuits, have no congeniality, there cannot exist an intimate or permanent friendship, and even their casual intercourse must be comparatively heartless and joyless. 'Can two walk to-

[1] Balmer.

gether except they be agreed?' "[1] We have seen how "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses; seeing that he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" how he brings men, naturally afar off, nigh by the blood of the cross; how he "abolishes the enmity thereby;" how the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ on the conscience purifies the heart, and sheds abroad there the love of God, and all its blessed holy fruits.[2]

Our heavenly Father, regarding his adopted, regenerated children with ineffable, complacential delight, cannot but take pleasure in giving them tokens of his love; and they, on the other hand, cannot be happy if their fellowship be not with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. He comes to them through the mediation of his Son. They go to him through the same mediation. He, "for the great love wherewith he loves them, blesses them with heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus;" and they, "by one Spirit through him, have access to the Father," in the full assured belief that "his blood cleanseth from all sin," and that "he, ever living to make intercession for them, is able to save them to the uttermost." Knowing that they "have a great High Priest for them passed into the heavens," they habitually "come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need."[3]

This intercourse is chiefly maintained through the instituted means of christian worship, secret, private, and public. It is in reference to these that Jehovah promises to come to his people, and bless them, and supply their need; and it is in reference to these that they say, "We will go into his tabernacles, we will worship at his footstool;" "then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy;" in Bethel, in his own house, God Almighty met with me and blessed me; "it is good for me to draw near to God."[4]

We have thus seen, that the great design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ, is to bring men to God; from a state of ignorance and error into a state of true knowledge; from a state of enmity into a state of friendship; from a state of dissimilarity into a state of resemblance; from a state of non-intercourse into a state of fellowship. We have seen that the atonement actually does all this; and we have seen too, in some measure, *how* it does all this.

This glorious design it gains to a certain extent, in the case of every believer, even in the present world. This glorious design it will gain in absolute perfection, with regard to every believer, with regard to the whole company of believers, in the heavenly state. Having given himself for them, and having purified them by his Spirit, through his word and providential dispensations, he will collect them all together (there is to be "a gathering together at his coming"), and present them to God, his Father and their Father, his God and their God, "a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" saying, "Behold me and the children thou hast given me;" "not one of them is lost." Then will it appear how careful the good Shepherd has been

[1] Balmer. [2] 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. Col. i. 20. Eph. ii. 15. Heb. ix. 14.
[3] Eph. ii. 18. John i. 7. Heb. ii. 25; iv. 15, 16.
[4] Psal. cxxxii. 7; xliii. 4; lxxiii. 28. Gen. xlviii. 3.

of his charge; "how faithful to Him who appointed him." They are all raised up at the last day, near, very near to God; so far as the difference of nature admits, "holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect;" even their bodies fashioned like unto the glorious body of him who is God manifest in flesh. Then shall be fulfilled, in all its extent of meaning, that promise, which cheered the heart of the Saviour amid the toils and sorrows, the agony and blood, of the great work of expiation. "Since he has made his soul a sacrifice for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he has borne their iniquities. Therefore, will I give him the great for his portion, and he shall have the strong for his spoil, because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." With gladness and rejoicing shall his redeemed ones be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace, "and there they shall abide." They shall be forever with the Lord; like him, seeing him as he is; beholding, and, as far as it is possible, sharing his glory and his blessedness. And all this is the result of Christ, the just One, suffering for sins in the room of sinners.[1]

And now let us once more, each for himself, seriously propose the question, Have I thus, through the atoning death of Christ, been brought to God? Have I been conformed to his image? Have I been introduced into his fellowship? Have I been delivered from this present evil world through Christ giving himself for me? Have I been redeemed from my vain conversation received by tradition from my fathers? Have I indeed been born again? Have I received "a divine nature?" Have I become "a new creature?" Is my mind conformed to God's mind—my will to God's will? And is my conformity to God increasing? Am I growing in knowledge, and purity, and love? Am I becoming more and more a partaker of his holiness? Am I daily receiving spiritual benefits from God, and rendering daily to Him the expressions of a grateful mind, a loving heart? And can I say, "Truly, my fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; my conversation is in heaven; my affections are set on things above?"

The person who is a stranger to the state and exercises of mind described in these expressions, whatever profession he may make, has not received the atonement. As yet Christ has died in vain, so far as he is concerned. He is not yet brought to God. Let all of us beware of resting short of this conformity to, this fellowship with, God. Let us beware of resting in speculation, in profession, in formal worship, in external obedience. Let us especially put far away from us the monstrous thought, that we can be enjoying the Divine favor and fellowship through the atonement of Christ, while living in sin. To expect this is to expect an utter impossibility; is to impose on ourselves by a damnable delusion. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial?" "If we say that we have

[1] Eph. v. 27. Isa. viii. 18. Heb. ii. 13. Isa. liii. 10–12.

fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;" that is, he and we have indeed communion, "and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." [1]

Let the conviction be every day deepened, that coming to God in the way of assimilation and fellowship is absolutely necessary to our true and final happiness; and that this conformity to, this communion with, God can be obtained only "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Yes, my brethren, it is in the faith of the truth, respecting the great atonement, that the sinner finds "redemption from all his iniquities." There is no possibility of being conformed to God till we are reconciled to God; it is at the cross that the pilgrim loses his burden; and there is no being reconciled to God without being conformed to Him.

Let all those who, through the power of the atonement, and by the faith of the truth, have obtained some measure of conformity to God, and of favorable intercourse with him, seek larger, and still larger measures of those spiritual blessings from the same source, through the same channel. Let them never forget that they must owe their sanctification as well as their justification, their new character as well as their new state, to God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, a sacrifice for sin, to Christ the just One suffering for sins in the room of the unjust. Christ, "Christ crucified," is all in all. "All things are of God," through his Son. "Of God are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." [2] To him be all the glory.

V.—THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS SUFFERINGS.

The consequences of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings come now to be considered. They are thus stated by the apostle: "Christ the just One, having suffered for sins in the room of the unjust, that he might bring them to God," was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who sometime were disobedient; and having risen from the dead, he went into heaven, where he is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."

The Bible has often been represented as a book full of obscurities and difficulties; by infidels, who wish to disprove its Divine origin; by Roman Catholics, who need an argument to prove the necessity of tradition, on which their system rests, and an apology for their apparently impious and paradoxical conduct, in withholding a confessedly Divine revelation from the unrestrained perusal of the common people, and endeavoring to keep it covered by the veil of a dead language; and by mere nominal Christians among Protestants, who equally need an excuse for their habitual neglect of a volume which they admit to be of Divine authority, and profess to regard as the ultimate rule of religious faith and moral duty. And if the Bible were really so full

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. 1 John i. 6, 7. [2] Col. iii. 11. 2 Cor. v. 18. 1 Cor. i. 30.

of obscurity and difficulty, if it were the ambiguous and unintelligible book it has been represented, neither the careless Protestant nor the cautious Catholic would be much to be blamed, except for inconsistency; and even with this minor fault the infidel would not be justly chargeable; for if he can make out his premises, that the Bible is an unintelligible book, there can be little difficulty in admitting his conclusion, that it is not a Divine one. A book full of darkness cannot come from Him who "is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all;" and it is certainly useless to read what it is impossible to understand.

But it is not true that the Holy Scriptures are full of obscurities and difficulties. The Bible, generally speaking, is a very plain book. It would not be easy to find a book of its size on its subjects, where there is so much level to the apprehension of ordinary understandings. No person who sits down to the study of it with an honest wish to apprehend its statements, will find any great difficulty in discovering what are the doctrines it unfolds, or what are the duties it enjoins. "The commandment of the Lord is *pure*,"[1] that is, clear as the light of heaven, "and it enlightens the eyes." But though the Bible is not *full* of obscurities and difficulties, there are obscurities and difficulties in it. It is with the great light of the moral, as of the natural, world, the whole of its disc is not equally lustrous. There are spots in the sun; but he must be very blind or very perverse, who should on that account maintain that the sun is not a luminous body at all; and insist that it gives no light, and that, if it rays forth anything, it rays forth darkness.

On the other hand, he who insists that there are no spots on the sun, and he who insists that there are no difficulties in the Bible, equally prove that they are very superficial observers, or very prejudiced judges. That in writings so ancient as the Hebrew Scriptures, published originally in a state of society so different from that which at present prevails, among a people whose language has long ceased to be spoken, and whose laws, and customs, and manners have little resemblance to ours, there should be difficulties, was naturally to be expected, and, indeed, this could not have been prevented without a miracle. But these obscurities attach themselves to comparatively but few passages; and the difficulties to which they give origin are gradually diminishing and disappearing as the knowledge of the sacred languages, antiquities, and criticism makes progress; and with regard to those which remain, there are two considerations that deserve remark: the first, that in no case is there uncertainty cast on any of the leading facts or doctrines or laws of revelation by these obscurities and difficulties; and the second, that in almost every case, though in some passages there may be words or phrases, the precise import or reference of which it may be difficult or impossible to determine with certainty, these passages are found notwithstanding replete with important instruction.

These remarks are applicable to the passage of Scripture to which our attention has for some time been directed. The observation of the Apostle Peter, respecting his beloved brother Paul, is applicable

[1] Psal. xix. 8. "Clarum, dilucidum."—ROSENMÜLLER.

to himself. In his epistles "there are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest to their own destruction,"[1] and this is one of them. Few passages have received a greater variety of interpretations; and he would prove more satisfactorily his self-confidence than his wisdom, who should assert that *his* interpretation was undoubtedly the true one. Yet, though we should not be able to determine with absolute certainty who those spirits in prison are, and when, and where, and how, and for what purpose, Christ went and preached to them; and whatever opinion we may adopt as most probable on these subjects, no christian doctrine, no christian duty, is affected by our uncertainty or by our opinion. Even were we holding what appears to us the least probable one, that the words teach us, that our Lord, during his disembodied state, went to the region of separate souls, and made a communication of some kind to its inhabitants, either to such of them as were "in safe keeping," in paradise, or "in prison," in Gehenna, they would give no countenance to the delusive dreams either of the Roman Catholic respecting purgatory, or of the Universalist concerning the possibility of favorably altering the condition of men after they have left the present state; they would merely state an insulated fact, nowhere else referred to in Scripture, and from which no legitimate consequence can be deduced at all inconsistent with any other portion of revealed truth; and, though we should never obtain satisfactory information on the points referred to, how replete with truth and holy influence is the sentence (v. 18-22), of which one or two clauses, are, to us, obscure, perhaps unintelligible, "how profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness!" It would be very presumptuous to expect that I should be able to remove entirely difficulties which have baffled the attempts of the ablest interpreters. Yet I believe that patient, careful, honest, persevering, prayerful study of any portion of God's word, is never unproductive of some good effect; and I must say, after the experience of forty years' study of the Bible, that in inquiring into the meaning of Scripture, "darkness has often been made light before me, crooked things straight, rough places plain."[2]

The consequences of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord, plainly divide themselves into two classes. First, such as took place *not* in heaven; for that is all that we yet consider ourselves as warranted to say of them; whether on the earth, or under the earth, may perhaps appear in the course of our illustrations; "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; he by it went and preached to the spirits in prison, who sometime were disobedient;" and, secondly, such as took place in heaven. "Having risen from the dead, he went into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."

§ 1.—*He became dead in the flesh, quickened in the Spirit, and went and preached to the spirits in prison.*

Let us attend to these two classes of the consequences of our

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

[2] See note C.

Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings in their order; and, first, Of those which took place not in heaven.

Some interpreters consider only the words rendered "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," as descriptive of the consequences of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings. What follows they consider as referring to something which he did in or by the same Spirit by which he was quickened, on another occasion altogether, at a former period, so long gone by as the antediluvian times. They interpret the words descriptive of the consequences of our Lord's sufferings for sins in the room of sinners thus, He was violently put to death, in his body, or in his human nature, but he was quickened, restored to life, by the Spirit; that is, either by the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Holy Trinity, or by his Divine nature, the spirit of holiness, according to which he is the Son of God, in contradistinction to his being the son of David according to the flesh; that Spirit by which he was justified; that eternal Spirit through which he offered himself to God, a sacrifice without spot or blemish; and the remaining part of the statement they consider as equivalent to, By the Holy Spirit inspiring Noah as a preacher of righteousness, or in his Divine nature, through the same instrumentality, he in the antediluvian times "went and preached," either a pleonastic expression for preached, or intimating that he came from heaven in his Divine influence and operation, as he came to paradise in the cool of the day, came down to see the tower of Babel, came down on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law; made known the will of God to the men of that generation, who were *then* "spirits in prison," condemned men, doomed to punishment for their sins, and kept as in a prison till the time of execution, when the flood came; or who are *now* spirits in the prison of hell, kept along with the evil angels, "under chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day."

The sense thus brought out of the words is self-consistent, and not incompatible with any of the facts or doctrines of revelation; but this mode of interpretation seems to us liable to great, and indeed insurmountable, objections. The words flesh and spirit are plainly opposed to one another. The prepositions *in* and *by* are not in the original. The opposed words[1] are in the same case; they stand plainly in the same relation respectively to the words rendered put to death and quickened,[2] and that relation should have been expressed in English by the same particle.[3] If you give the rendering, "put to death *in* the flesh," you must give the corresponding rendering, "quickened *in* the spirit," which would bring out the sense, either 'quickened in his human spirit or soul;' a statement to which it is difficult to attach a distinct meaning, for the soul is not mortal; Christ's spirit did not die; and to continue alive is not the meaning of the original word; or 'quickened in his Divine nature,' a statement obviously absurd and false, as implying that He who is "the life," the living one, can be quickened, either in the sense of restored from a state of death, or endowed with a larger measure of vitality.

[1] Σαρκὶ—πνεύματι. Hæc verba pro ἐν σαρκὶ ἐν πνεύματι et quidem pro adjectivis (adverbiis?) posita videntur.—Storr.

[2] Θανατωθείς. Ζωοποιηθείς.

[3] See note D.

On the other hand, if you adopt the rendering of our translators in the second clause, "quickened *by* the Spirit," then you must render in accordance with it the first clause, 'put to death *by* the *flesh*.' If, by the Spirit, you understand the Divine nature of our Lord, by the flesh you must understand the human nature, which makes the expression an absurdity. On the other hand, if you understand by the Spirit the Holy Ghost, then by flesh you must understand "mankind," put to death by men, but restored to life by God the Spirit. This interpretation, though giving a consistent and true sense, the sense so forcibly expressed in Peter's words to the Jews, "whom *ye* crucified; whom *God* raised from the dead," is forbidden by the usage of the language. Then there can be no doubt that there does appear something very unnatural in introducing our Lord, in the midst of what is plainly a description of the results of his atoning sufferings, as having in the Spirit, by which he was quickened after he had been put to death, gone many centuries before, in the antediluvian age, to preach to an ungodly world; and there is just as little doubt that the only meaning that the words will bear, without violence being done them, is, that it was, when he had been put to death in the flesh and quickened in the Spirit, or by the Spirit, whatever that may mean, he went and preached; and that "the spirits," whoever they be, were "in prison," whatever that may mean, when he preached to them.

These are not all the difficulties connected with this interpretation, which may be termed the common Protestant interpretation of the passage; but they are quite sufficient to convince us that it is untenable, and to induce the apprehension, that it would never have been resorted to but from its supposed necessity to destroy the shadow of support which another mode of interpretation gives to some of the errors of Popery, which have, by that "deceivableness of unrighteousness" which characterizes the system, been turned to great account in fettering the minds and plundering the property of the unhappy victims of that masterpiece of imposture and superstition; or to the soul-endangering dream of Universalism, that there are means of grace of which those who die unforgiven may avail themselves in the separate state, so as to avert the natural results of their living and dying in unbelief and impenitence.

Another class of interpreters consider the whole statement before us as referring to what happened subsequent to, and consequent on, our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings.[1] Some of these consider the event referred to in the words, "He went and preached to the spirits in prison," as having taken place during the interval between our Lord's death and resurrection; others as having taken place after his resurrection. The first consider the words rendered "having been put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," as equivalent to "having become dead as to his body (a very fair rendering of the words), but continuing alive as to his soul (a sense which the original words will not bear), he in that soul went to the region of separate souls, Hades, the invisible state, and there preached to the spirits in prison, who before were disobedient." The

[1] See note E.

second consider the words referred to as equivalent to, "Being put to death in his human nature, but restored to life by his Divine nature, or by the Holy Ghost, he in his resurrection body, which they conceive was not subject to the ordinary laws of matter, in his new life, went down to the region of separate souls, and there preached to the spirits in prison."

These two classes of interpreters, holding in common that our Lord went down to Hades, are considerably divided as to what was his object in going there, as described or hinted at in the passage before us; one class holding that he went to hell (Gehenna), the place of torment, to proclaim to the fallen angels, who are kept there under chains of darkness, as the spirits in prison (though how *they* could be said to be disobedient in the days of Noah, does not appear, and besides these spirits seem plainly to belong to the same class of beings as "the souls" that were saved, verse 20), to proclaim throughout that dismal region his triumph over them and their apostate chief; another class holding that he went to this place of torment to announce his triumph over the powers of darkness, and to offer salvation through his death to those human spirits who had died in their sins; a third class holding that he went to purgatory to release those who had been sufficiently improved by their disciplinary sufferings, and to remove them to paradise; and a fourth class who translate the "spirits in prison,"[1] "the spirits in safe keeping," holding that he went to paradise, the residence of the separate spirits of good men, to announce to them the glad tidings, that the great salvation, which had been the object of their faith and hope, was now completed.

Each of these varieties of interpretation is attended with its own difficulties, which appear to me insuperable. Some of them go upon principles obviously and demonstratively false; and all of them attempt to bring much out of the words which plainly is not in them. To state particularly the objections against them, would occupy a good deal of time, and I am afraid would afford little satisfaction and less edification to my hearers. There are, however, common difficulties bearing on them all which seem quite sufficient to warrant us to set them all aside, and which may be stated in a sentence or two. It seems incredible, if such events as are darkly hinted at rather than distinctly described in these words thus interpreted, had taken place, that we should have no account of them, indeed, no certain allusion to them in any other part of Scripture.[2] It seems quite unaccountable why the separate spirits of those who had lived in the days of Noah, and perished in the deluge, are specially mentioned as those, among the inhabitants of the unseen world, to whom the quickened Redeemer went and preached, the much greater multitude who, before that time, and since that time, had gone down to the land of darkness, being passed by without notice. And what will weigh much with a judicious student of Scripture is, that it is impossible to perceive how these events, supposing them to have taken place, were, as they are

[1] Τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι.

[2] "They that think Christ's soul and godhead preached to spirits while his body lay in the grave, suppose that those spirits knew it whom it concerned: but if it had been necessary for us to know not only Christ's preaching to ourselves but to them, he would surely have more clearly told it us."—RICHARD BAXTER.

represented by the construction of the language to be, the effects of Christ's suffering for sins in the room of sinners, and how these statements at all serve to promote the apostle's practical object, which was to persuade persecuted Christians patiently and cheerfully to submit to sufferings for righteousness' sake, from the consideration, exemplified in the case of our Lord, that suffering in a good cause, and in a right spirit, however severe, was calculated to lead to the happiest results. No interpretation, we apprehend, can be the right one, which does not correspond with the obvious construction of the passage, and with the avowed design of the writer.

Keeping these general principles steadily in view, I proceed now to state, as briefly, and as plainly as I can, what appears to me the probable meaning of this difficult passage: "A passage," as Leighton says, "somewhat obscure in itself, but as it usually falls, made more so by the various fancies and contests of interpreters aiming or pretending to clear it."

The first consequence of those penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings which Christ, the just One, endured by the appointment of his Father, the righteous Judge, for sins, in the room of the unjust, noticed here is, that he, "was put to death in the flesh."[1] The unjust, in whose room he stood, were doomed to death, and he, in bearing their sins, submitted to death, to a violent death, to a form of violent death which, by a Divine appointment, marked him as the victim of public justice.[2] He was with wicked hands crucified, hanged on a tree; and he that was hanged on a tree was declared to be accursed, or to have died as a victim of sin by the hand of public justice. The idea here, however, seems not to be so much the violent nature of the infliction, as its effect, the entire privation of life, and consequently of power. The word seems used as in Rom. vii. 4, "Ye are become dead."[3] He became dead in the flesh, he became bodily dead.[4] He lay an inanimate, powerless corpse in the sepulchre.

But his becoming thus bodily dead and powerless was not more certainly the effect of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, than the second circumstance here mentioned, his "being quickened in the Spirit." If this refer to his resurrection, we must render it quickened by the Spirit; but we have already seen that, without misinterpretation, it cannot be so rendered. Besides, the resurrection is expressly mentioned in the 21st verse, in connection with the ascension to heaven. To be quickened in the Spirit is to be quickened spiritually, as to be put to death in the flesh is to become dead bodily. This interpretation is quite warranted.[5] The word rendered to be quickened,[6] literally signifies to be made alive or living. It is used to signify the original communication of life, the restoration of life to the dead, and the communication of a larger measure of life to the living. A consequence of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory suf-

[1] Θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ. Morte affectus, quoad corpus.—KUTTNER.

[2] Deut. xxi. 23. Gal. iii. 13.

[3] Ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ—not "ye have been put to death by the law." [4] Σαρκικῶς.

[5] Thus, poor in spirit, πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι; i. e. πνευματικῶς.—Matt. v. 3. Waxed strong in spirit, ἐκραταιοῦτο πνεύματι; i. e. πνευματικῶς.—Luke i. 80. Rejoiced in spirit, ἠγαλλιάσατο τῷ πνεύματι; i. e. πνευματικῶς, &c.—Luke x. 21.

[6] Ζωοποιεῖσθαι.

ferings was, that he became spiritually alive and powerful, in a sense, and to a degree, in which he was not previously; and in which, but for these sufferings, he never could have become—full of life to be communicated to dead souls, mighty to save. He was thus spiritually quickened. "The Father gave him to have life in himself, that he might give eternal life, to as many as the Father had given him, to all coming to the Father through him." "All power," even the power of God, "was given to HIM," who had been crucified in weakness; and by this power he lives and gives life. "The second Adam" thus became "a quickening spirit." He became, as it were, the receptacle of life and spiritual influence, out of which men were to "receive, and grace for grace." As a Divine person, all life, all power necessarily inhered in his nature; but as Mediator, that spiritual life and energy which make him powerful to save, are gifts bestowed on him by the Father, as rewards of his obedience to death, and as the means of gaining the ultimate object of his atoning sufferings. He asked of the Father this life, and he gave it him. It was the consequence of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, on which his intercession is based. It is to this that he refers when he says, "Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die," or rather, fall into the ground, being dead, "it abideth alone; but if it die," if it be dead, "it bringeth forth much fruit." Had Christ not died as the victim of sin bodily, he could never have "lived forever" as an all-successful Intercessor, "able to save us to the uttermost"—forever.[1] "If I," said he, "be lifted up," lifted up on the cross ("for this he said signifying what death he should die"), "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me."[2] "The Captain of Salvation was perfected by suffering." "Because he humbled himself, God highly exalted him, and gave him" all "power over all flesh," all "power in heaven and earth."

The spiritual life and power conferred on the Saviour as the reward of his disinterested labors in the cause of God's honor and man's salvation, were illustriously manifested in that wonderful quickening of his apostles by the communication of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; and in communicating through the instrumentality of their ministry spiritual life, and all its concomitant and following blessings, to multitudes of souls dead in sins.[3]

It is to this, I apprehend, that the apostle refers, when he says *by which*, or *whereby*, by this spiritual quickening, or *wherefore*,[4] being thus spiritually quickened, "he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who beforetime were disobedient." If our general scheme of interpretation is well founded, there can be no doubt as to who those "spirits in prison are." They are not human spirits, confined in bodies like so many prisons, as a punishment for sin in some previous state of being; that is a heathenish doctrine, to which Scripture, rightly interpreted, gives no sanction; but sinful men righteously condemned, the slaves and captives of Satan, shackled with the fetters of sin.

[1] Εἰς τὸ παντελες. Heb. vii. 25. [2] John xii. 24, 32.

[3] Πορευθεὶς postquam in cœlum ascendit ut mox, com. 12.—John xiv. 2, 3, 12, 28; xvi. 7, 28. Dicitur Christus predicasse gentibus, quia Apostoli id ejus nomine et virtute fecerunt.—2 Cor. v. 20. Acts xiii. 47. Rom. xv. 16. Gal. ii. 8. Eph. ii. 17.—GROTIUS.

[4] Ἐν ᾧ. Τοῦτο ΕΝ Ὡι ἀντὶ τοῦ ΔΙΟ κεῖται αἰτιολογικῶς. ŒCUMENIUS.

These are the captives to whom Messiah, "anointed by the Spirit of the Lord," that is, just in other words, "quickened in the Spirit," was to proclaim liberty, the bound ones to whom he was to announce the opening of the prison. This is no uncommon mode of representing the work of the Messiah. "Thus saith the Lord God, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes; to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."[1] "He said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages: That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves: they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far; and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim."[2]

It is not unnatural, then, that guilty and depraved men should be represented as captives in prison; but the phrase "spirits in prison," seems a strange one for spiritually captive men. It is so; but the use of it, rather than the word, *men* in prison, or prisoners, seems to have grown out of the previous phrase, quickened in spirit.[3] He who was quickened in the Spirit had to do with the spirits of men, with men as spiritual beings. This seems to have given a color to the whole passage: the eight persons saved from the deluge are termed eight *souls*.[4]

[1] Isa. xlii. 5, 7. [2] Isa. xlix. 3, 12. [3] "Congruens sermo."—BENGEL.

[4] Πνεύματα hic in genere denotant homines quemadmodum paullo post ψυχαὶ ἐν φύλακι. Judæi sub jugo legis—Gentiles sub potestate Diaboli—Illos omnes Christus liberavit, prædicationem verbi sui ad ipsos mittens, et continuans, et Apostolos divina virtute instruens.—SCHŒTGENII. Horæ Heb. p. 1043.

But then it seems as if the spirits in prison, to whom our Lord, quickened in spirit, is represented as coming and preaching, were the unbelieving generation who lived before the flood, "the spirits in prison, who aforetime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." This difficulty is not a formidable one. This stumbling-block may easily be removed. "Spirits in prison," is a phrase characteristic of men in all ages. We see nothing perplexing in the statement, 'God sent the gospel to the Britons, who, in the days of Cæsar, were painted savages:' the persons to whom God sent the gospel were not the same individuals who were painted savages in the days of Cæsar; but they belonged to the same race. Neither should we find anything perplexing in the statement, Jesus Christ came and preached to spiritually captive men, who were hard to be convinced in former times, especially in the days of Noah.[1] The reason why there is reference to the disobedience of men in former times, and especially in the days of Noah, will probably come out in the course of our future illustrations.

Having endeavored to dispose of these verbal difficulties, let us now attend to the sentiment contained in the words 'Jesus Christ, spiritually quickened, came and preached to the spirits in prison, who in time past were disobedient.' The coming and preaching describe not what our Lord did *bodily*,[2] but what he did *spiritually*;[3] not what he did personally, but what he did by the instrumentality of others. The Apostle Paul has explained the meaning of the Apostle Peter, when, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, he represents Christ as, after "having abolished in his flesh the enmity, coming and preaching peace to them who were afar off, and to them who were nigh," that is, both to Gentiles and to Jews. Another very satisfactory commentary may be found in the gospels. "All power is given unto me," said our Saviour after being quickened in the spirit, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. *Go* ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. So, then, after the Lord had *thus* spoken to them, he was received into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."[4] To the apostle, who was born as one out of due time, the commission was, "I send thee to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ;" and whatever Paul did effectually, in the discharge of that commission, it was not *he*, but *Christ* by him.[5] Thus, then, is Christ, quick-

[1] Grotius's note is worth quoting:—*Quales* animi olim Noæ temporibus non obtemperarunt. Loquitur quasi iidem fuisent: et fuerunt *iidem*, spiritus, sive animi—iidem non *ἀριθμῷ*, ut Aristoteles loquitur, sed genere."

[2] Σαρκικῶς, or σωματικῶς. [3] Πνευματικῶς.

[4] Eph. ii. 13–17. Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. Mark xvi. 19, 20.

[5] Acts xxvi. 16–18. Rom. xv. 18.

ened in consequence of his suffering, the just one in the room of the unjust, going and preaching to the spirits in prison.

There are two subsidiary ideas in reference to this preaching of Christ, quickened in the Spirit, to the spirits in prison, that are suggested by the words of the apostle, and these are,—the success of his preaching, and the extent of that success. These spirits in prison had "aforetime been disobedient." Christ had preached to them not only by Noah, but by all the prophets, for the spirit in the prophets was "the Spirit of Christ;" but he had preached in a great measure in vain. He had to complain in reference to his preaching by his prophets, and in reference to his own personal preaching, previously to his suffering the just in the room of the unjust, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain. All day long, I have stretched out my hands to a stiff-necked and rebellious people." "Who hath believed our report?" But now, Jesus Christ being quickened by the Spirit, and quickening others by the Spirit, the consequence was, "the disobedient were turned to the wisdom of the just," and "the spirits in prison" appeared "a people made ready, prepared for the Lord." The word, attended by the Spirit, in consequence of the shedding of the blood of the covenant, had free course and was glorified, and "the prisoners were sent forth out of the pit wherein there was no water." The prey was taken from the mighty, the captive of the terrible one was delivered. The sealed among the tribes of Israel were a hundred forty and four thousand, and the converted from among the nations, the people taken out from among the Gentiles, to the name of Jehovah, formed an innumerable company, "a multitude which no man could number, out of every kindred, and people, and tribe, and nation." It was not then, "as in the days of Noah, when few, that is, eight souls were saved." Multitudes heard and knew the joyful sound; the shackles dropped from their limbs, and they walked at liberty, keeping God's commandments. And still does the fountain of life spring up in the quickened Redeemer's heart, and well forth, giving life to the world. Still does the great Deliverer prosecute his glorious work of spiritual emancipation. Still is he going and preaching to the "spirits in prison;" and though all have not obeyed, yet many already have obeyed, many are obeying, many more will yet obey.

The connection of Christ's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, with this increased spiritual life and vigor in Him, as the Redeemer and Saviour of men, and its blessed consequences, in the extensive and effectual administration of the word of his grace, is stated here, but not here only. It is often, as I have already had occasion to remark, brought forward in Scripture: "Christ has redeemed men from the curse of the law, having become a curse in their room, that the blessing of Abraham," a free and full justification, "might come upon the Gentiles, and that men might receive the promised Spirit through believing." "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come; but if I go away I will send him to you." The Spirit is given because Jesus is glorified; and Jesus is glorified for he has "finished the work which the Father had given

him to do," in laying down his life for his sheep, and in giving his flesh for the life of the world.

This connection between the atoning death of Christ, and his being quickened, and the quickening of men by him, may be easily understood. The truth respecting it may be stated in a sentence or two. The power of dispensing Divine influence formed an important part of our Lord's mediatorial reward; and it was impossible to conceive of any reward more suitable to his holy, benevolent character; and there was an obvious propriety that the work should be accomplished before the reward was conferred. Besides, the truth respecting Christ suffering and dying, the just in the room of the unjust, is the grand instrument which the Holy Spirit employs for converting men, for quickening dead souls. This is the great subject of efficient preaching. Till the atonement was made, the revelation of it could be but obscure. It was meet that the great Preacher should have a clear, full message to proclaim, before he came and preached to every nation under heaven; and that the great spiritual agent should be furnished with the fittest instrumentality for performing all the moral miracles of the new creation. Such appears to me the probable meaning of this much disputed passage.

This view of the subject has this additional advantage, that it preserves the connection of the passage, both grammatical and logical. The words of the apostle, thus explained, plainly bear on his great practical object. 'Be not afraid, be not ashamed of suffering in a good cause, in a right spirit. No damage comes from well-doing, or from suffering in well-doing. Christ, in suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, suffered for well-doing: and, though his sufferings ended in his dying bodily, they ended also in his being spiritually quickened; and, through the effectual manifestation of the truth, becoming the "Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him." Nor is this all. Even his mortal body has, in consequence of these sufferings, been raised from the grave, and in that body he is "gone into heaven, and has sat down on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."'

I am farther confirmed in this view of the passage, by observing that in one very important part of it I have the support of Archbishop Leighton. In the text of his commentary, he interprets the passage according to the usual Protestant mode of exposition; but in a note he observes—"Thus I then thought, but do now apprehend another sense as more probable. The mission of the Spirit, and the preaching of the gospel by it, after his resurrection: preaching to sinners, and converting them according to the prophecy which he first fulfilled in person, and after, more amply, in his apostles; that prophecy, I mean Isa. lxi.: The Spirit was upon him, and was sent from him to his apostles, to preach to spirits in prison, to preach liberty to the captives, captive spirits, and therefore called *spirits* in prison, to illustrate the thing the more by opposition to that Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of liberty, setting them free; and this to show the greater efficacy of Christ's preaching than of Noah's, though he was a signal preacher of righteousness, yet only himself and his family, eight persons, were

saved by him, but multitudes of all nations by the Spirit and preaching of Christ in the gospel."

What a striking light does this representation cast on the deplorable condition of fallen men! "Spirits in prison;" "dead souls." There is something monstrous here. Nothing naturally so free as spirit; nothing so full of life as *souls*. How deplorable to see bondage and death, where there originally was nothing but liberty and life! We may be disgusted, but we are not surprised at seeing a loathsome reptile crawling on the earth. But we are at once amazed and shocked, when we see the bird of the sun, with blinded eyes, and broken pinions, and soiled feathers, moving with awkward difficulty along the ground, instead of "sailing with supreme dominion through the azure deep of air," [1] "unscaling his sight at the fountain of radiance." [2] Alas, what a captivity!—condemned—waiting the hour of the execution of the sentence—no possibility of effecting their escape. Nor man nor angel can open the door of their prison-house. Yet are they, blessed be God, prisoners of hope. There is a Saviour, and a great one: Jesus, who "saves his people from their sins," and who, in doing so, "delivers them from the wrath to come."

How well fitted is He for performing all the functions of a deliverer! This is a second reflection suggested by our subject. He has become perfect through sufferings. He has all the merit; all the power, both as to external event and internal influence; all the authority; all the sympathy that is necessary to enable him, effectually to liberate the prisoners of divine justice, the captives of infernal power. He has suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, so as to become dead, as the victim of human transgression; and the atonement made by these sufferings is an atonement of infinite value. And he has been spiritually quickened; endowed with such a superabundance of life as to enable him to give eternal life to innumerable dead souls; and endowed with an infinity of energy, so that he can vanquish the enslavers, level the prison walls, loose the fetters of innumerable "spirits in prison."

Prisoners of hope, turn the eye of faith and desire towards your all-accomplished Deliverer. Remember, now is the accepted time. Yet a little longer and you will be prisoners more than ever; but no longer prisoners of hope. To borrow the earnest expostulations of a pious divine, "Oh, do not destroy yourselves! You are in prison; he proclaims your liberty. Christ proclaims your liberty; and will you not accept it? Think, though you may be pleased with your present thraldom and prison, it reserves you (if you come not forth) to another prison, which will not please you. These chains of spiritual darkness in which you now are, unless ye be by him freed, will be exchanged, not for freedom, but for the chains of everlasting darkness, wherein the hopeless prisoners are kept to the judgment of the great day." [3] Accept his offer of deliverance, life, liberty. The eternal life which was with the Father gives you life; receive it, and you have life; you have it abundantly. Blessedness is yours, yours forever. "The Son makes you free, and ye are free indeed."

In what a dignified light does this passage represent the ministry

[1] Gray. [2] Milton. [3] Leighton.

of Divine truth! It is the work of the perfected Saviour. Having suffered to the death for sins, in the room of the unjust, and having been spiritually quickened, he comes and preaches to the spirits in prison. He preaches peace to those who are afar off, and to them who are nigh. The voice is on earth, the speaker is in heaven. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath received by inheritance a more excellent name than they." He that neglecteth and despiseth the word of reconciliation, despiseth not man but God—God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself: wonderful, most wonderful! beseeching men to be reconciled to Him. Surely we should see that we "refuse not Him that speaketh thus to us from Heaven." Surely we should "give the more earnest heed to things which we have heard, which we now hear from him, lest at any time we should let them slip; for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them who heard him; God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

The exalted Redeemer is the great, the only effectual, preacher. His ministers preach with effect only when he speaks and works *in* them and *by* them. It is an advice full of wisdom, as well as of piety, which the good archbishop gives to those who are anxious to derive saving advantage from the ministry of the word: "Ye that are for your own interest, be earnest with this Lord of life, this fountain of spirit, to let forth more of it upon his messengers in these times. You would receive back the fruit of your prayer. Were ye living this way, you would find more life and refreshing sweetness in the word of life, how weak and worthless soever they were that brought it. It would descend as sweet showers upon the valleys, and make them fruitful."

"Brethren, for your own sakes, as well as ours, pray for us, that the word of the LORD may have free course and be glorified." *His* word is quick and powerful. It is "spirit and life;" it "converts the soul; it makes wise the simple; it rejoices the heart; it enlightens the eyes; it endureth forever." It is as powerful now as in the primitive age. It still "brings down high imaginations;" and while it emancipates the imprisoned spirit from the thraldom of depraved principle, satanic power, and human authority, "it brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Oh! that through *his* preaching many may be thus at once emancipated and made captive, freed from the fetters of earthliness and sin, bound in the chains of holy principle and divine love; may at once cease to be "spirits in

prison," and become inhabiters of that "high tower, that impregnable fortress," in which all obedient to his call are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

The subject we have been considering in this section of the discourse, brings also before the mind, in a very striking form, some of the great motives and encouragements to missionary exertion. The state of the unenlightened part of mankind, as spirits in prison, calls for our sympathy; and, since their imprisonment is not hopeless, it calls for our exertions to procure their emancipation. Had there been no atoning sacrifice, no quickening Spirit, it would have been godlike to mourn their servitude and condemnation, but it would have been madness to have attempted their deliverance.

But there has been an all-perfect, an infinitely valuable, atoning sacrifice offered up; Christ, the just One, has died in the room of the unjust, for the express purpose that enslaved, condemned man may be brought to forgiveness and liberty, by being brought to God. No legal bar lies in the way of the emancipation of the spirits in prison, for the offered sacrifice has been accepted. The righteous Judge is well pleased with it, and is ready to demonstrate that he is just in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus. He has shown this, by bringing from the dust of death, and seating on his right hand, Him who gave himself a ransom for many. And as there is a law-satisfying atonement, so there is a powerful quickening Spirit, who gives life and liberty. He who was put to death in the flesh, is spiritually quickened by that Spirit. And having that Spirit given him without measure, he, in the word of the truth of the gospel, not only proclaims liberty to the captive, but, going forth by the Spirit, he actually unlooses their fetters, and gives them at once that power and the disposition to walk at liberty, keeping the commandments of God. Yes, He who died, the just in the room of the unjust, He who, to make atonement for sin, was "crucified in weakness," and "became dead in the flesh," having been "quickened in the Spirit," lives by the power of God, and has come preaching to the spirits in prison, making the perverse willing in the day of his power, and "turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."

The great work of the emancipation of the spirits in prison is not, then, a hopeless one. Many have been delivered, multitudes more will be delivered. Jesus Christ has not died in vain. The life which the Father has given him to have in himself shall not remain dormant and inoperative. It was so ordained that he might be a fountain of life to spiritually dead man, and might quicken whom he would. This great work of the emancipation of spirits in prison is, strictly speaking, the work of the *Divine* deliverer. He only could make atonement; He only can give the Spirit.

But he has most kindly and wisely so arranged the method of emancipation, that a place is afforded for the active willing services of those whom he has delivered, in accomplishing the actual enfranchisement of their brethren who still remain "spirits in prison." The gospel which announces the atonement, and in connection with which the Spirit is given, is to be diffused, not by miraculous means, not by angelic agency, but by the voluntary exertions of spiritually emanci-

pated men. It is by their exertions, as the helpers of the Lord, that the chariot in which the Redeemer rides forth prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness, taking captive captivity, wresting his slave from the mighty, his prey from the terrible one, moves on. They are that angel by which the everlasting gospel is to be preached to them who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. It is in the gospel thus propagated, that we are to look for him who is quickened in the Spirit to preach effectually to the spirits in prison. Let, then, the considerations, that mankind, the great body of our race, are in a state of condemnation and spiritual slavery; that an all-perfect atoning sacrifice has been offered up, suited to them all, sufficient for them all, offered to them all; that by that sacrifice an honorable channel has been opened for the life-giving, liberty-giving spirit; that a plain, well-accredited record has been given into our hands, a record fitted and intended to be the Spirit's instrument of putting the individual sinner in possession of the saving results of the atonement, and of filling his heart with the energies and joys of spiritual life and liberty, and that this record is put into *our* hands for the purpose of being universally made known, that wherever there are spirits in prison, liberty may be proclaimed to them;—let these considerations make their due impression on us; and then, instead of wearying in well-doing, allowing our zeal to abate, or our exertions to diminish, we shall be "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in this work of the Lord," counting it a high honor that we are permitted to take a part, however humble, in carrying forward towards complete accomplishment the mighty enterprise in which God makes known the depth of his wisdom, the greatness of his power, and the riches of his grace, and for which His incarnate Son died on earth, and reigns in heaven.

§ 2.—*He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him.*

The second statement in reference to the consequences of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, comes now to be considered. "Having been raised from the dead, he went into heaven, where he is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him." Our Lord's resurrection; his ascension or entrance into heaven; his session at the right hand of God; and the subjection of angels, and authorities, and powers, to him; all viewed as the consequences of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings; these are the interesting topics to which your attention is now to be directed.

(1.) *His resurrection.*

I remark, then, that as the result of his penal, vicarious, expiatory, sufferings, our Lord was raised from the dead. He not only, by laying down, as the victim of human guilt, his natural life as a man, ob-

tained for himself that spiritual life and vigor, in the exercise of which he subdued multitudes of the hardened race which had stood out against former attempts to reclaim them; but he also, after a short season, resumed the life which he had laid down. The body of Jesus, after he had, on the cross, given up the ghost, was taken down, and laid in a sepulchre, and his parted spirit went to paradise.[1] The two constituent parts of his human nature were completely separated, disjoined from each other, though neither of them was disunited from his divinity, and remained in a state of separation for a season, from the evening of the sixth to the morning of the first day of the week; a season sufficiently long, in connection with the circumstances of his crucifixion, to prove that his death was not seeming, but real.

Our Lord had repeatedly assured his disciples that he would rise again, rise again on the third day, though it seems plain they attached very indistinct ideas to these words till events made them plain. Rumors respecting these statements had got abroad, and the Jewish authorities thinking, or pretending to think, that his disciples would attempt to steal his body, and turn his empty grave in connection with these statements to account, in support of their Master's claim to Messiahship, took every precaution to secure the sepulchre from violation till after the specified period had elapsed. But how vain these counsels, how fruitless these attempts to defeat the purposes of God, to falsify the declarations of his Son! He that sat in the heavens laughed at them. Jehovah held them and their endeavors in derision. These endeavors to render impossible the proof of Jesus' Messiahship, ended in furnishing the most convincing demonstration of that great fact, on which, above all others, the evidence of that truth rests.

"In the end of the Sabbath," we are informed by the sacred historian, "as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, became as dead men," and precipitately retreated from a scene so full of terror.[2] It was amid these awful appearances of nature, meet accompaniments of a transaction so inappreciably important, that the Son of God exercised his power, in taking up again that life which no man could have taken from him, but which he had laid down of himself; and that the Father, "according to the working of his mighty power," fulfilled his ancient promise, that the soul of his Holy One should not be left in the separate state, and that his body should not see corruption.[3]

The resurrection of our Lord in the body in which he lived and died, as it is the fact on which, above all others, rests his claims and our hopes, is established by the most infallible proofs, the most abundant evidence. The sepulchre was found empty on the morning of the third day. That is an indubitable fact; and the only satisfactory, the only plausible account that ever has been given of that fact, is the

[1] Luke xxiii. 43. [2] Matt. xxviii. 1–4.
[3] John x. 17, 18. Eph. i. 19. Psal. xvi. 10.

resurrection. The only other account of it which the ingenuity of ancient and modern infidels has been able to devise, is the self-contradictory story—a story which bears collusion on the face of it, which was put into the mouths of the Roman soldiers, "that the disciples came by night and stole him away while they slept." [1]

The resurrection makes all things plain. It suits with all that went before and all that followed. On the supposition that it did not take place, the history of the life and death of Jesus, and the history of his religion, are alike riddles and mysteries, involved in inextricable difficulties. No human ingenuity can in this case reconcile the authenticated facts with the ordinary principles of human nature, and the established laws of the moral world.

Nobody can doubt that the resurrection of Christ was taught by his original followers; "Jesus and the resurrection" were their great themes. This, supposing that he had not risen from the dead, could only originate either in fraud or in enthusiasm. If fraud had existed, it must have been detected. There was no want of power, or disposition, or opportunity, to detect it. Besides, the character of the apostles; their previous views and conduct; their personal toils, hazards, and sufferings, in a cause which, if not the cause of truth, could do nothing for them, but, on the contrary, entail ruin on them in both worlds; their making the propagation of this fact, and of others connected with it, their great business through life, and then cheerfully sealing their testimony by their blood; all these make it as certain as anything of the kind can be, that there was no imposture in the case. And if they did not deceive, it is just as plain they were not, they could not be deceived. They were intimately acquainted with Jesus previously to his death; they often saw him during the six weeks he continued on earth after his resurrection. "It was not one person, but many, that saw him; they saw him, not only separately, but together; not only at night, but by day; not at a distance, but near; not once, but several times. They not only saw him, but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, and examined his person to satisfy their doubts." [2] Well might the evangelical historian say, that "to the apostles whom he had chosen, he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs." [3]

The proofs of the resurrection of Christ should be most familiar to our minds; for it is the very corner-stone of christian evidence. "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, our faith is vain;" the apostolic testimony is falsehood; "we are yet in our sins;" and all our hopes of pardon and eternal life are delusive dreams. And viewed in connection with the doctrine, that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," the statement, that He "rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures," forms an essential part of that gospel which has been preached to us by the apostles, which we also have received, and wherein we stand, by which we shall be saved, if we keep in memory what has been preached to us; for "this is the word of faith which we preach," says the apostle, "that if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." [4]

[1] Matt. xxviii. 13. [2] Paley. [3] Acts i. 3. [4] 1 Cor. xv. 1–4, 14–17. Rom. x. 8–10.

The resurrection of our Lord owes its peculiar importance to the fact of its being the result of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings. It is the evidence that the supreme Judge is satisfied with these sufferings, as an adequate compensation for the injuries done to his law and government by the sins of men. "It is finished," said the Saviour from the cross; and from out the empty sepulchre comes, to the ear of enlightened faith, the echo of these words, "It is finished;" for God, as "the God of peace," the reconciled Divinity, he who was angry at the sins of men, but whose anger is turned away, "has brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."[1] Because that blood, by which the everlasting covenant was to be ratified, has been shed, therefore "hath God raised him up from the dead, and given him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God,"[2] as well pleased *with* Him, well pleased with us *in* Him. Having fully answered all the demands of that law under which he was made, "for the unjust," having fulfilled all righteousness, having become a curse for them, having become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, it was not possible that he should continue bound by the bands of death. The only reason which ever existed for his dying—to wit, that human guilt might be expiated, existed no longer. Human guilt is expiated; the great atonement has been made; and it is meet that He who was "given," devoted to death as a victim "for our offences," on account of our sins, should be "raised again for our justification;"[3] that is, I apprehend, on account of that which avails to our justification, his finished work, called our justification, as it is that which justifies us.[4]

(2.) *His ascension to heaven.*

I now proceed to remark, in the next place, that as the result of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, our Lord ascended to heaven. "He is gone into heaven," says the apostle. When our Lord was raised from the dead, it was not that he might continue to be an inhabitant of this lower world. It was, that in the nature in which he had obtained eternal redemption for all who obey him, he might, on the throne of the universe, preside over the whole train of events by which this everlasting deliverance, in all the variety of its blessings, should be bestowed on those for whom it was procured. He remained on earth long enough to give satisfactory evidence of the reality of his resurrection, and "to give commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen" to wait for the communication of the promised Spirit, and then, in his name, to "go into all the world," and proclaim to mankind his doctrine and law.

When the forty days appointed for these purposes had elapsed, and the time of his being taken up had come, "He led his disciples out from Jerusalem as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands, and blessed them; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from

[1] Heb. xiii. 20. [2] 1 Pet. i. 21. [3] Rom. iv. 25.

[4] "*Our* offences"—the ground of our condemnation—were the procuring cause of his death; "*our* justification," that which justifies us—his "obedience unto death"—is the procuring cause of his resurrection. This interpretation secures to διὰ with the accusative the same sense in both clauses, and that sense its proper sense.

them, and carried up into heaven." They eagerly gazed after him as he majestically rose, with extended blessing hands, till a cloud received him out of their sight; and, "while they stood looking steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up to heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."[1]

Such is the sublimely simple account of our Lord's going into heaven; but from the intimations of ancient prediction in reference to this event, we cannot doubt that it was accompanied with circumstances of grandeur, too glorious to be made the subject of contemplation to men dwelling in flesh. Beholding it in prophetic vision, at the distance of many centuries, we find the inspired bard exclaiming, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive."[2] "It would seem," as has been remarked,[3] "that the two radiant messengers who appeared to the disciples as they were gazing after their Master with ardent eyes, formed only a small part of his celestial retinue. It would seem that in his train there were thousands and myriads of the chariots or cavalry of God: that legions of the heavenly hierarchies, and a countless multitude of the noblest of created beings, tuned their harps, or sounded their trumpets, in his praise." It is not an improbable conjecture, though it is nothing more, that "the many saints" who came out of their graves after his resurrection joined him as he ascended, and went with him into heaven, as a proof that he had vanquished sin and death, and become the first fruits of them that sleep."

We cannot help attempting to follow him in thought. As he draws near to the heavenly Zion, the perfection of beauty, the city of the great King, the habitation of the heavenly Majesty, the tabernacle which God, not man, has pitched; the whole celestial city is moved at his coming, the everlasting gates are flung open for his reception, and "with gladness and rejoicing he is brought and enters into the King's palace." "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."[4]

Where that heaven is which has received our Lord, and which must retain him during "the times of restitution of all things,"[5] where "he must reign till all his enemies become his footstool,"[6] we need

[1] Luke xxiv. 50, 51. Acts i. 9–11.
[2] Psal. lxviii. 17, 18.
[3] Balmer.
[4] Psal. xlvii. 5, 6; xxiv. 7, 10.
[5] Acts iii. 21. Ἄχρι χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων.—Luke iv. 13. Acts xiii. 11. Rom. v. 13. Gal. iv. 2. In all these passages, ἄχρι seems to signify "during"—not "until."
[6] 1 Cor. xv. 25.

not inquire, for it is impossible for us to know; but we are warranted in asserting, that it is a place where all the perfections of the Deity, which can be manifested by means of material grandeur and beauty, are displayed in a degree of which we can form no adequate conception; and that whatever can render a place desirable as a residence to a perfectly holy embodied human mind, with its intellectual faculties and moral dispositions and sensibilities in the highest state of perfection, is to be found there in absolute completeness. The best notion we can form of it is the general one, that it is the place which the eternal Father, the God of infinite power, and wisdom, and righteousness, and love, has prepared as a meet residence for his incarnate Only-Begotten, in whom he is well pleased, after he had on earth finished the work which he had given him to do.

The body in which our Lord rose and ascended was the body in which he had lived and died. It was flesh and blood, as he himself very explicitly states. But "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." A change seems to have taken place on it on the occasion, similar to that which "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, is to pass on the saints who are found alive on the earth at the coming of our Lord, and which also shall take place on them when they are "caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."[1]

This ascension to heaven, like the resurrection which preceded it, is a result of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord. "He that ascended is the same as he that descended;" and it is because he descended to the lowest depths of suffering as our appointed victim, that he ascends to the sublimest heights of celestial honor and felicity as our perfected Redeemer. The entrance within the veil into the holy of holies was closely connected with the offering of the sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of the whole congregation of Israel. The High Priest entered there, to present the blood of the sacrifice before God. He could not enter there without having made ceremonial expiation for them by that blood; and it was in consequence of our great High Priest having, by his own sacrifice, "forever perfected all those who are sanctified,"[2] that he passed through these visible heavens, the antitype of the veil under the Mosaic economy, to appear in the true Holy of Holies, in the presence of the Divine majesty, with the tokens of his completed sacrifice, and to plead for the communication of those blessings for which he had paid the price, even his own blood.

(3.) *He is "on the right hand of God."*

Another result of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings is, His being on the right hand of God, in that heaven into which he entered. The phrase, in its complete form, is, "He sitteth on the right hand of God." This phrase, which occurs frequently in the New Testament, is plainly borrowed from Psalm cx., where Jehovah is represented as saying to Messiah, the Prince, David's Lord, "Sit on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."[3] The language is plainly figurative. Neither "the right hand of God," nor

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 50, 52. 1 Thess. iv. 17. [2] Heb. ix. 12; x. 14. [3] Psal. cx. 1.

"sitting" at his right hand, can be literally understood. The figure is, a person sitting on the throne, on the right hand of the sovereign.

Some have strangely held that this is intended to betoken the inferiority of Christ to the Father. It has been said, a person, whom it was intended very highly to honor, was placed on the left hand of the person intending to honor him. But, whatever might be the practice among other nations, the right hand was, among the Jews, undoubtedly, the place of honor, and by their customs must their writings be expounded. Others, still more strangely, have held, that it indicates that, in a certain sense, Christ is superior to the Father. This assertion is absurd and blasphemous. For what saith the Scripture? "The Father hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted who did put all things under him."

The leading idea is common possession, with his Father, of the power and authority and glory of supreme Governor. Paul expounds it to us. Having quoted the text in Psalm cx., "Sit thou at my right hand, till I have made thine enemies thy footstool," he draws the conclusion, "He must reign till all his enemies are put under his feet."[1] To use the language of Daniel: "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given to him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." "The Father judgeth no man; he hath given all judgment to the Son." "He hath put all things under his feet," in giving him a seat at his right hand, on his throne.[2]

While this is undoubtedly the primary idea, there are other, and not unimportant, secondary ones, indicated by this phrase. There is the glory and dignity connected with such power and authority. Sitting on the right hand of God, amid the splendors of the burning throne, he is "crowned with glory and honor." All human, all created glory, when compared with this, grows dim and disappears. And there is also the idea of supreme blessedness, "At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore;" "The King," sitting on Jehovah's right hand, "joys in his strength, and greatly rejoices in his salvation. He hath given him his heart's desire, and hath not withholden the request of his lips. He hath prevented him with the blessings of his goodness; and set a crown of pure gold on his head. His glory is great in his salvation; honor and majesty has he laid on him. For he has made him most blessed forever; he has made him exceeding glad with his countenance."[3]

There seems, too, in the words, an intended tacit contrast to the posture of the priests, even when in the Holy of Holies. They "*stood* ministering," at a humble distance before the emblematical throne of God, the mercy-seat. He "sits down on the throne, on the right hand" of him that sits thereon.[4]

[1] 1 Cor. x. 25.
[2] Dan. vii. 13, 14. John v. 22. Psal. viii. 6. Comp. 1 Cor. xv. 27 and Heb. ii. 8, 9.
[3] Psal. xvi. 11; xxi. 1–6.
[4] Heb. x. 11, 12.

This, like the other things mentioned in the text, is the result of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings. These dignities are the purchase of his sufferings, the reward of his toils. It was "for the suffering of death that he was crowned with glory and honor." It was by giving himself a sacrifice that he overcame the enemies of man's salvation; and it was because "he overcame that he sat down on his Father's throne." And in the Apocalypse, when represented in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, he is said to be a Lamb as it had been slain; and the song of worship by the redeemed to him is, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his own blood." [1]

(4.)—*Angels, authorities, and powers, are made subject to Him.*

I have only further to remark, that "the having angels, authorities, and powers, made subject to Him," is the result of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord. These words are not perhaps so much the expression of a new thought, as the expansion of the primary idea contained in "is at the right hand of God," which is, as we have seen, supreme dominion. The three words, "angels, authorities, and powers," may either be considered as all descriptive of angelic beings, and as equivalent to all orders of angels, angels both authorities and powers, the same orders that are elsewhere styled "principalities and powers;" or authorities and powers may be viewed as intended to denote the various forms of human authority and power. We are rather disposed to take the first view of the words, a view which by implication contains the second; for certainly if the highest orders of creatures are made subject to him, all inferior orders must be subjected to him also.

The exalted Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, is the Lord of angels. The command given to them "when the Father is bringing in the first-begotten into the world," that is, putting him in possession of his inheritance as "heir of all things," is, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" [2] a command which we find from the Apocalypse they joyfully obey. "He is their king, and they acknowledge him to be so, and do incessantly admire and adore him. They rejoice in his glory, and in the glory and happiness of men through him. They yield him most cheerful obedience and serve him readily, in the good of his church and every individual believer, as he deputes and employs them. There are two things intended in these words; Christ's dignity above the angels, and Christ's authority over the angels." [3] He has an essential dignity above the angels. He has received by inheritance a more excellent name than they. "Created spirits" is their name; "the only-begotten Son" is his. To which of the angels did he ever say, "Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee?" He has also a mediatorial dignity above them. As God-Man, he has been "made much better than the angels." "He is Lord of all;" they are servants. Human nature in him is exalted above all angelic nature. "That nature

[1] Heb. ii. 9. Rev. iii. 21; v. 6, 12.

[2] Heb. i. 6; comp. Psal. xcvii. 9. For illustration of the phrase εἰσαγάγῃ εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, see Exod. vi. 8; xv. 17; xxiii. 23.

[3] Leighton.

which he stooped below them to take on, "being made lower than the angels," he has carried up and raised above them. The very earth, the flesh of man, is exalted in his person above all those heavenly spirits, who are of so excellent and pure a being in their nature, and have been from the beginning of the world clothed with so transcendent glory. A parcel of clay is made so bright and set so high as to outshine those bright flaming spirits, those "sons of the morning," by being united to the Fountain of Light, the blessed Deity in the person of the Son. In coming to fetch and put on this garment, he made himself lower than the angels: but carrying it with him, at his return to his eternal throne, and sitting down with it there, it is high above them. This they look upon with perpetual wonder, but not with envy or repining. No! Among all these eyes no such evil eye is to be found. Yea, they rejoice in the infinite wisdom of God in this design, and his infinite love to poor lost mankind. It is wonderful to see him filling the room of their fallen brethren with new guests from earth, yea, such as were born heirs of hell; thrice wonderful to see not only sinful men thus raised to a participance of glory with them who are spotless, sinless spirits, but their flesh in their Redeemer, dignified with a glory so far beyond them. This is that mystery which they are intent in looking and prying into, and cannot, nor ever shall, see the bottom of it, for it hath none. The words intimate not only Christ's dignity above, but his authority over, his angels. They are not only servants, but his servants. He is their Lord, and they worship him. They are under his command for all services in which it pleases him to employ them; and the great employment he assigns them is the attending on his church, and his particular elect ones. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" [1] He who commands angels must control devils. He who is the Lord of angels must be the Lord of all inferior orders of beings, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," "having all power over all flesh," "all power in heaven and in earth."

That this possession of unlimited power and authority, like the resurrection and ascension, is the result of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord, is very explicitly stated in scripture. I shall content myself with quoting two passages. The first is that very remarkable statement in the Epistle to the Philippians, ii. 5–11: "Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The other passage I referred to is in the book of Revelation, v. 8–10. It is the song of the redeemed in heaven. Falling down before the Lamb, they exclaim, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof," that is, to unfold, by accomplishment, the decrees of the Eternal, "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and

[1] Leighton. Heb. i. 14.

glory, and blessing; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us to our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." Thus have I completed my illustrations of the five great topics suggested in this very fruitful passage of scripture. The illustrious sufferer, Jesus Christ the just One, His sufferings, and the nature, the design, and the results of these sufferings.

VI.—THE TENDENCY OF THESE TRUTHS RESPECTING THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE CHRISTIANS SUFFERING FOR HIS CAUSE.

It only remains that I, in a very few words, endeavor to show how these topics, as treated by the apostle, are fitted to serve the purpose for which they are brought forward here; that is, to reconcile Christians to sufferings in the cause of Christ, and to give them support and direction under such sufferings.

The subject is a wide and interesting one, but I must confine myself to a hurried sketch of leading thoughts, which you will do well to follow out in your private meditations. My object as a christian teacher now and at all times should be, not to save my hearers the trouble of thinking, but if possible to compel them to think, and to furnish them with some helps for thinking rightly and usefully.

When involved in suffering, support and direction are obtained by turning the mind to the contemplation of the great and good who have been placed in similar circumstances. It is on this principle that the apostle puts those to whom he wrote, in mind, that "the same afflictions to which they were exposed had been accomplished in their brethren who had been in the world;" and that his beloved brother Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, turns the attention of those to whom *he* wrote to "the great cloud of witnesses" to the power of faith in the hour of trial, with which they were surrounded. There is no example, however, so fraught with instruction and comfort as that of "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith;" and the points in which that example is instructive and consolatory, are finely brought out in the passage before us.[1]

"Even Christ, the just One, suffered." If Christ suffered, should Christians think it unreasonable that they should be called to suffer? "Is it not enough that the disciple be as his teacher, the servant as his Lord?"[2]

And they need not count it strange, though they be harmless and blameless, that they yet suffer. "The just One suffered"—suffered not only though he was just, but because he was just. If they are like Him, they may expect to be treated as he was treated, to "be in the world as he was in the world." If it were otherwise, they would have reason to doubt their discipleship. If the world loved them, it would be strong presumption at least that they were the world's *own*. The hatred of the world and its consequences are among the proofs that Christ has "chosen us out of the world."[3]

To suffer for Christ, to suffer like Christ, is an honorable thing. It

[1] 1 Pet. v. 9. Heb. xii. 1, 2. [2] Matt. x. 24, 25. [3] John xv. 18, 19.

is to have fellowship with Christ, the Lord of glory, in that in which his glory was very remarkably displayed.

Christ, the just One, suffered for sins, for sinners, for our sins, for us sinners. If he suffered to obtain our salvation, should we grudge to suffer to uphold and extend his glory and cause?

If we are *in* him, his sufferings are ours as to their effects; they have expiated our guilt, so that all our sufferings are not penal, but disciplinary; are fatherly chastisements, not wrathful inflictions. Christ has made all sufferings safe and pleasant to his disciples by this one thing, that he suffered once for sins. He has stripped the cross of its worst terrors; he has taken the curse out of it; and made it light to carry, and easy to endure. He has taken the poison out of the cup of affliction; and we can take the cup, however bitter, and bless the name of the Lord. He enables us to say, 'Since he has expiated my sin; since He has secured my salvation, deal with me as thou wilt; afflict me how, when, as heavily as it shall please thee; all is well.'

As to sufferings *for* Christ, they are a privilege and honor. "It is given us on Christ's behalf to suffer for his sake."[1]

He suffered "that he might bring us to God." Surely that is a blessing so great, that, in token of gratitude for it, we should cheerfully do whatever he commands, cheerfully submit to whatever he appoints.

And these our sufferings are, under the influence of his Spirit, one of the means, one of the most powerful of the means, which he is employing, that in our case the design of his death may be realized; that we may be brought to God, made to know him, to enjoy the sweets of his favor and fellowship, "made partakers of his holiness."[2]

His sufferings were severe sufferings—sufferings even to death. Let us not, then, think even "fiery trials" strange. What are the severest of our sufferings when compared with his? Let us not wonder, if we be conformed to our Lord, in continuing to suffer in some form or other while we continue to live.

If we are his, death, as in his case, will put an end to all our sufferings. When he became dead bodily, he was quickened spiritually; and is it not so with his people? Is it not, "when they are weak, that they are strong?" Out of weakness, do they not often wax strong? and, "when the outward man perisheth, is not the inward man strengthened day by day?"

As to individual christian experience, personal suffering is very generally connected with the acquisition of spiritual strength. And in reference to power to do good, to promote the cause of Christ, have not the sufferings of Christians been fully as efficient as their exertions? "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church;" and Christianity, as well as Christ, may say to her enemies, "Rejoice not against me; when I fall, I shall arise."[3]

Christ's sufferings ended in his resurrection, his ascension, and his celestial dignity, power, and glory. And so will ours, if we be his, and follow in the steps of the example he has left us in suffering for

[1] Phil. i. 29. [2] Heb. xii. 10. [3] 2 Cor. iv. 16. Micah. vii. 8.

us. "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him." It is the purpose of the Father to conform all his children to the image of "the First-Born among many brethren;" first as suffering, then as glorified. "If we suffer with him, it is that we also may be glorified with him." "To him that overcometh he will give to sit with him on his throne, even as he overcame, and has sat down on his Father's throne."

And are these sufferings of the present time, however severe and protracted, "worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" when we shall enter into his joy, see and share his glory, and have even these "vile bodies fashioned like unto his glorious body?" Are they not light, however heavy? Are they not but for a moment, however long continued, when looked at in contrast with the "exceeding great and eternal weight of glory;" implied in being "with Christ," being "like Christ," in holiness, in felicity, and in glory, forever and ever?[1] Surely, surely it is better, since such is the will of God, that we should suffer for Christ, like Christ, than that we should not suffer. Paradoxical as they may appear to a worldly mind, strangely as they may sound to a worldly ear, the apostle's judgment was wise, and his exhortation reasonable: "We count them happy who endure, suffering wrongfully." "Count it all joy when ye are brought into divers trials. Yes, blessed is the man that endureth such trials."[2] Here, as in everything else, "Good is the will of the Lord"—Christ. So rich in instruction and comfort is the example of Christ to the suffering Christian.

"The example and company of the saints in suffering is very considerable, both for guidance and consolation; but that of Christ is more than any other, yea, than all the rest put together. Therefore, the apostle having, in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, represented the former at large, ends on this as the top of them all: 'Looking to Jesus.' There is a race set before us: it is to be a race with patience," or rather perseverance, "and without fainting. Now he tells us of a cloud of witnesses, a cloud made up of the instances of believers who have suffered before us; and the heat of the day wherein we run is somewhat cooled even by that cloud compassing us; but the main strength of the comfort here lies in beholding Christ, eyeing his sufferings, and their issue. The considering and contemplating of Him will be the strongest cordial, will keep you from wearying and fainting by the way."[3]

It is only Christians, in the true sense of that word, that can derive from the sufferings of Christ the advantages which we have now been illustrating. Men, while they continue in their sins, can have neither part nor lot in this matter. They must suffer, for they are men; and "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;" "Man born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble;" but under their afflictions they have none of the supports and consolations which the children of God, the disciples of Christ derive, from the consideration, that "even Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God." Their afflictions are indeed intended

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 12. Rom. viii. 17, 29. Rev. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 17.
[2] James v. 11; i. 2, 12. [3] Leighton.

to rouse them to serious thought, to tell them they are sinners, to show them what an evil and a bitter thing sin is, and to make them feel how much they need a Saviour; but if these afflictions are not improved for this purpose, they will turn out to have been but the first prelusive drops of the overwhelming storm of Divine vengeance.

But why should men continue in sin, in guilt, in depravity; why shut themselves out of all solid comfort under suffering here, as well as all well-founded hope of happiness hereafter, since the great atonement has been made, and is in the word of the truth of the gospel held out to them as the sure ground of hope for eternity? The statements in the text, as a source of direction and support and comfort under affliction, can be of no use to the unbelieving sinner. But he has a very deep interest in these statements, forming as they do, the very essence of that gospel, those glad tidings of great joy which are to be made known to all nations, "preached to every creature under heaven." "Christ died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring men to God." We proclaim this as the ground of hope to the perishing sinner, as well as the source of comfort to the suffering saint. "He who knew no sin was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This is the very truth most sure, "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." Let the greatest sinner believe this testimony of God concerning his Son, and in the faith of that truth, he obtains a saving interest in those penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings. He obtains "the redemption that is in Christ through his blood, according to the riches of the Divine grace;" he is brought to God. And then he will find, that the atoning sufferings and death of the Son of God are not only the price of his justification and the ground of his hope, but that they are to him an exhaustless source of powerful and persuasive motive to all the duties of the christian life, and of abundant and suitable consolation and support amid all the privations and sufferings, the bereavements and sorrows, the struggles and persecutions, in which he may be involved; while he is "in a constant continuance in well-doing," doing and suffering the will of God, seeking to be a follower of those who, through much tribulation, have entered into the kingdom—"who, through faith and patience, have become inheritors of the promises;" and seeking especially to tread in the steps of Him who is our pattern as well as our sacrifice—"who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."[1]

[1] Heb. xii. 2.

APPENDIX TO DISCOURSE XVI.—PART V.

FACTS IN ANTEDILUVIAN HISTORY REFERRED TO BY THE APOSTLE, AND THEIR BEARING ON HIS OBJECT.

1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.—Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not to the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Jewish Scriptures form an important and valuable portion of the volume of inspired truth. To those who lived previously to the Gospel revelation, they contained the only authentic and satisfactory account of the Divine character and will, in reference to man as a fallen creature; they were their sole trustworthy guide to truth, duty, and happiness. They were, accordingly, highly valued by the wise and pious under the ancient economy. "The law of thy mouth," said the Psalmist, and he expressed the common sentiments and feelings of the body of the faithful, "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver;" "More to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, yea, than the honey-comb."[1] Even to us, to whom "the mystery which had been kept secret from former ages and generations has been made manifest," the Jewish Scriptures are calculated to answer many important purposes. Though the Mosaic dispensation "has waxed old and vanished away,"[2] the writings of the prophets have not become obsolete. The pure radiance of apostolical doctrine has not extinguished the dimmer light of ancient history and prophecy. On the contrary, as if borrowing new splendor from the full-risen Sun of righteousness, they cheer us with a brighter and warmer beam than they ever reflected on those who, but for them, must have walked in darkness. In the great edifice of revealed truth, the Old Testament Scriptures are not the scaffolding which, when the building is finished, ceases to be useful, and is removed as an unsightly incumbrance; they are the foundation and lower part of the fabric, forming an important constituent part of "the building of God," and are essentially necessary not only to the beauty, but to the safety, of the superstructure.

It is impossible, indeed, to demonstrate the divinity of Christianity and the truth of New Testament doctrine and history, on principles which have no direct reference to any former revelation of the Divine

[1] Psal. cxix. 72 · xix. 10. [2] Rom. xvi. 25, 26. Heb. viii. 13.

will; but it is at the same time true, that one of the most satisfactory proofs of these truths is founded on the admission of the divinity of the Jewish sacred books, and consists in the minute harmony of Old Testament prediction with New Testament history and doctrine. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Few exercises are better fitted at once to enlarge the information and strengthen the faith of the Christian, than a careful perusal of the Old Testament Scriptures, with a constant reference to Him who is "the end of the law," the substance of all its shadowy ceremonies, to Him of whom "Moses in the law and the prophets did write."

This, however, is by no means the only way in which the Old Testament Scriptures are calculated to minister to our improvement. They contain in them an extensive collection of instructions and warnings, counsels and consolations, suited to mankind in every country and age. The man of piety, wherever or whenever he may live, finds, in the sacred odes of David, at once a fit vehicle for his devotional feelings, and a perfect pattern for his devotional exercises; the maxims of Solomon are found equally suitable for the guidance of our conduct, as of that of his contemporaries; and, though many of the writings of the prophets bear plain marks of being occasional in their origin and reference, relating to events which, at the time of their publication, excited general interest among the people to whom they were given, yet it is amazing how few passages are not obviously calculated to convey instruction, universal and permanent, fitted to be useful to all men in all time.

Even the historical books of the Old Testament are fitted, in a variety of ways, to promote the improvement of the Christian, and on this account have strong claims on our attentive study. Like every true history, and indeed in a much higher degree than any other history, they convey to us in the most engaging form, much information regarding the character and government of God, and respecting the state and dispositions and duty of man. They contain an account of the origin and progress of that system of Divine dispensations which found its accomplishment in the redemption of mankind by the death of the incarnate Son of God; an account without which much of the christian revelation would have been obscure, if not unintelligible. They suggest numerous proofs and illustrations of the characteristic principles of the christian revelation, and thus at once enable us more fully to understand and more firmly to believe them. The minds of the writers of the New Testament were full of the facts and imagery of the earlier revelation, and they can be but very imperfectly understood—they are constantly in danger of being misunderstood by those readers who have not, by carefully studying the Old Testament Scriptures, acquired a somewhat similar familiarity with them.

Of the manner in which the New Testament writers employ their familiarity with the Old Testament for the illustration of the subjects which come before them, we have a striking instance in that portion of the interesting paragraph just read, to which your attention is now about to be more closely directed. The paragraph is a statement of the truth with regard to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, in their nature,

design, and consequences, made for the purpose of affording instruction and support to his followers when exposed to suffering in his cause. In the course of this statement the apostle refers to certain facts in antediluvian history, recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, as having a bearing on the facts respecting Jesus Christ which he states, or on the object for which he states these facts. To ascertain distinctly what are the facts in antediluvian history to which the apostle refers, and to show if possible what is his design in referring to them, what bearing they have on the obvious general purpose of the whole paragraph—are the two objects which I shall endeavor to gain in the remaining portion of these remarks.

The passage which is to form the subject of exposition, though not formally, is plainly, substantially, parenthetical, and is contained in these words: "The spirits in prison sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

I.—FACTS IN ANTEDILUVIAN HISTORY REFERRED TO BY THE APOSTLE.

The first thing we have to do, then, is to bring before your minds the facts, in the history of the antediluvian world, to which the apostle here refers. "The spirits in prison sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water." I have already endeavored to show, that the most probable interpretation which has been given to the somewhat remarkable phrase, "spirits in prison," is that which considers it as a descriptive appellation of mankind in their fallen state. "Captives" and "prisoners" are figurative expressions, not unfrequently used in Scripture, to denote the condemned state, miserable circumstances, and degraded character of fallen men. Our Lord having obtained, by his atoning death, a mighty accession, in his official character, to his spiritual life and energy, went, and, through the instrumentality of his apostles, preached with remarkable success to those miserable captives, those spirits in prison, vast multitudes of them becoming obedient to his call.

It had not always been so. Communications of the Divine will had often been made in former ages to fallen men, without such effects. In particular, in a very remote age, at a period preceding the general deluge, those "spirits in prison," those condemned criminals, those willing captives of Satan and sin—not, indeed, the same individuals to whom our Lord "came and preached," but individuals of the same race, and therefore properly enough designated by the same name, had a Divine message sent them, and were the subjects of a remarkable manifestation of the Divine forbearance; they were almost universally disobedient to this message; and, in consequence of their disobedience, they were destroyed in the deluge. A very small minority were obedient, and in consequence of their obedience were saved in the ark,

"saved by water." These are the facts respecting the antediluvians, either explicitly stated, or necessarily implied, in the words before us.

We have but detached fragments of the history of mankind during the antediluvian period—a period of nearly seventeen centuries. This we know, however, that at the time which our text refers to, they had, with very few exceptions, become decidedly irreligious and excessively depraved. The language of the sacred historian is very striking: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth was corrupt," putrid, "before God, and the earth was filled with violence;" and "God looked on the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth." [1]

If men were thus irreligious and corrupt, it was not because they had not the means of being otherwise. If the primitive revelation, through the faith of which Abel obtained salvation, was forgotten, disregarded, or perverted, the fault was with mankind. Besides, God never "left himself without a witness, in that he gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." This goodness was calculated, was intended, to bring them to repentance, to change their minds respecting God, whom they had learned to think of as "such an one as themselves." "The heavens," before the flood as well as afterwards, "declared the glory of God, and the firmament showed forth his handy-work." "The invisible things of God were from the creation of the world clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;" so that, when the antediluvians, having the means of knowing God, "glorified him not as God, neither were thankful," but gave themselves up to work wickedness with all greediness, they "were without excuse." [2]

Nor was this all. It is reasonable to suppose that, during these seventeen centuries, direct Divine communications were made to the fallen race. It is certain that "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied," warning his contemporaries of the destruction which will ultimately overtake the ungodly, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints," or holy ones, "to execute judgment on all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." [3] Thus had God, by his Spirit, striven with men for more than fifteen hundred years. Sentence against men's evil works was not executed speedily, and the hearts of men were fully set in them to do evil.

Yet was he not "slack concerning his declaration, as some men count slackness." His wrath loses nothing by sleeping. It becomes fresher by repose. "The impenitent abusers of his patience, pay interest for all the time of their forbearance, in the increased weight of the judgment when it comes on them." The end of all flesh was now come before God, and he was about to destroy them "with," or from, "the earth." [4]

[1] Gen. vi. 5, 11, 12. [2] Acts xiv. 17. Psal. xix. 1, 2. Rom. i. 19, 20.
[3] Jude 14, 15. [4] Gen. vi. 13.

But "surely the Lord God will do nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets." There was but one in that generation to whom that name could be given. "Noah had found grace in the eyes of the Lord;" Noah, "by faith, had become an heir of the justification by faith;" he was "a just man, and perfect in his generation, and walked with God." This is the good report he has obtained. "THEE," said Jehovah, that is, *thee* alone, "have I seen righteous before me in this generation."[1] As he testified his regard to Abraham, by telling him of the approaching overthrow of Sodom; so he showed his peculiar favor to Noah, by announcing to him the coming destruction of his contemporaries. He said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."[2] He shall have an hundred and twenty years of striving with him still. It would seem that Noah was commissioned, not only to build the ark, but during its building to announce the approaching deluge, and to call men to repentance. We know that he was "a preacher of righteousness," and that he not only practically by his conduct, but verbally by his preaching, "condemned the world;"[3] told them of their sins, and warned them of their danger.

This is the revelation of the Divine will referred to in the text; and, as the spirit in the Prophets was the Spirit of Christ, THE WORD from the beginning being the great revealer of God, and making his revelations by his Spirit, Christ, who went in spirit to the spirits in prison by his apostles, may be considered as having gone to the same class of persons in spirit by his servant Noah. For one hundred and twenty years Noah proclaimed to a doomed world, "Repent;" as Jonah in after ages proclaimed to the doomed city, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Had Noah's preaching been as successful as Jonah's, we have no reason to doubt but that, as in that case, God "seeing their works, that they turned from their evil way, would have repented of the evil he had said he would do to them, and would not have done it."[4] These hundred and twenty years were years of further, years of peculiar, trial; the last opportunity to be afforded to that race for escape from final ruin. They were a period during which "God's long-suffering waited;" that is, God waited in the exercise of long-suffering. It was long-suffering, it was patience, which prevented the immediate infliction of the threatened vengeance; for the iniquities of that generation were full. Come the vengeance when it might, it could not come undeserved. But judgment is his "strange work." They shall have one warning more. He is not willing that they should perish.

And there is something in this warning, especially during the closing period of forbearance, peculiarly striking. "Noah, by faith being instructed of the Divine oracle concerning things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark." When we consider the size of the ark, and the time and labor necessary for collecting the animals which were to be saved in it (for we have no reason to think that their gathering together was entirely miraculous), it is obvious that it must have afforded him employment for a considerable period. It

[1] Gen. vi. 8. Heb. xi. 7. Gen. vii. 1.
[2] Gen. vi. 3.
[3] 2 Pet. ii. 5. Heb. xi. 7.
[4] Jonah iii. 10.

was a striking proof that Noah believed his own denunciation. It was an appeal thus, through the eye as well as through the ear, to that wicked, rebellious generation. But they looked on with a thoughtless eye, as well as listened with a careless ear. They were "disobedient." Noah to the men of his generation, like Lot to his sons-in-law, was "as one who mocked." They believed him not. When they saw the ark building, their sentiments probably found language in such words as these: 'What does the old dotard mean? Where does he intend to sail in this strange hulk? He will find some difficulty to launch it.' And when he told them of the coming ruin at the end of one hundred and twenty years, they were likely to say, 'You look far before you? And shall we perish and you only escape? We will take our chance.'

But God will not be mocked. His established law, "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," shall, at the appointed time, take effect. He is not slack concerning his threatenings any more than his promises, as men count slackness, though he is long-suffering, O, how long-suffering! Down to the period of the execution of his threatening, these doomed men seem to have been saying, "Where is the declaration of his coming? All things continue as they were." "They ate and drank; they married and were given in marriage."

The season of forbearance, long as it was, at last passed away. The ark was finished, and Noah and his family entered into it. "In that same day all the fountains of the great deep," the abyss of subterranean waters, "were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" to discharge the immense body of water held in solution by the atmosphere. The rains continued without intermission for forty entire days, and the eruption of subterraneous waters for one hundred and fifty days, until at length the inundation came to its height, and covered all the high hills which were under the whole heavens, fifteen cubits upwards above the highest. "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth, and every man." All, with the exception of Noah and his family, had been disobedient, and, with that exception, all perished. "The waters covered the enemies of God; not one of them was left."[1]

We pronounce no judgment as to the eternal state of all the antediluvians. It is possible that some of them in a right spirit, amid the rising waters of the deluge, sought mercy; and if they did, who dare say, who dare think, that it was refused them? but whether we look on earth or beyond it, without doubt that day was "a day of the perdition of ungodly men."

While the great body of the spirits in prison, in the days of Noah, were disobedient, and reaped the fruits of their disobedience, all were not impenitent and unbelieving. Noah was at once believing and obedient. His family were so far obedient that they availed themselves of the appointed means of deliverance. We have but too good reason to conclude that, in the best sense of the word, *all* of them were not obedient. They, to the amount of "eight souls," that is, persons,—Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives,

[1] Gen. vii. 11, 12, 17–24. Psal. cvi. 11.

entered into the ark, and were saved by water. "The Lord said to Noah, Come thou, and all thy house, that is, thy family, into the ark. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark: and the Lord shut them in. And when the waters increased they bare up the ark, and it was lift above the earth; and when the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly on the earth, the ark went on the face of the waters. And God remembered Noah, and those who were in the ark with him."[1] After five months' floating on a shoreless ocean, it rested on the mountain of Ararat; and after having been tenants of this strange mansion for a year and ten days, they, at the command of God, went forth to take possession of a world already smiling in vegetable beauty, whose solitudes were soon again to be peopled by the various animal tribes whose lives had been so strangely preserved amid the general destruction.

These "few, that is, eight souls," are said to have been "saved by water." Various meanings have been attached to these words; some considering them as equivalent to 'saved amid the waters;' others 'saved notwithstanding the waters;' 'saved by being conducted through the waters.' The meaning that the words most naturally suggest seems the true one. They were saved by means of the water. The water which drowned those out of the ark, saved those who were in it. The words of the sacred historian are the best commentary on the apostle's words: "The waters bore up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth, and it went on the face of the waters."[2] As, in consequence of the art of navigation, the ocean, which seemed calculated to separate completely the inhabitants of distant countries, unites them, becoming the great highway of nations; so the waters of the deluge, which were in their own nature fitted to destroy them, by means of the ark saved Noah and his family. Such, then, are the facts of antediluvian history which this passage brings before us.

II.—OBJECT OF THE APOSTLE IN REFERRING TO THESE FACTS.

Let us now inquire into the object of the apostle in referring to these facts, and show how they gain that object. It must be acknowledged that the design of the reference is by no means self-evident, or even very readily discernible. It does seem strange, that in the midst of a description of the results of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, there should be introduced a statement of what took place more than two thousand years before. It is plain, however, to the careful student of the Apostle Peter, that he was accustomed to think of the antediluvian world and the postdiluvian world, as of two orders of things which had such strong analogies of resemblance and contrast, as that events in the one naturally suggested to his mind what may be called the corresponding events in the other.

Thus, in the third chapter of his Second Epistle, he contrasts the two worlds. Of the one he says, "By the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water,

[1] Gen. vii. 1, 15, 16; viii. 1, 4. [2] Gen. vii. 17, 18.

perished;" and of the other he says, "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." And in the second chapter of the same Epistle, we find him saying, "God who spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly, knoweth" (in this new world) "how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." [1] Both worlds appeared to him peopled by fallen men doomed to punishment, "spirits in prison;" both privileged with a Divine revelation, proclaiming danger, and offering deliverance to those spirits in prison; both destined to be destroyed, as a manifestation of the Divine displeasure; the first by a deluge of water, the second by a deluge of fire. Taking this view of the subject, it does not seem strange that the mention of Christ, quickened in the Spirit, going and preaching to the spirits in prison by his apostles, as one result of his atoning sufferings, should have suggested to Peter's mind, his having in his pre-existent state gone in spirit by the ministry of Noah to the same class of persons in the antediluvian world.

But what is the apostle's object in this reference? His primary object is, if we mistake not, that to which we have already alluded; to illustrate by contrast the blessed effects of our Lord's going and preaching to the spirits in prison, after being quickened in spirit. When in the days of Noah he went and preached to them, "they were disobedient," all but universally disobedient, and "few, that is, eight souls," out, it is probable, of many millions, "were saved;" but now, though many are unbelieving and impenitent, still multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles have become obedient to the faith; and, before he finishes his preaching to the spirits in prison, much greater multitudes will yet become obedient. "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the people shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations." "The kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And, though many shall perish in the deluge of fire, yet still the saved shall not be counted by human numbers. There will be "*nations* of the saved;" and those set free from among the spirits in prison by the word of God, the truth which makes free indeed, shall be "a multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred and people, tribe and nation." [2]

A subsidiary, yet still an important, object in making the reference, seems to have been to bring these truths before the mind; first, that if Christ's preaching, when "quickened by the Spirit" he comes by the apostolic ministry, is disregarded and disobeyed, a more dreadful destruction will befall the unbelieving and impenitent than overwhelmed the antediluvians, who were disobedient to the revelation made by Noah: and secondly, that there is no escape from the destruction to which we are already doomed, but by availing ourselves now, as then, of the only divinely-appointed mode of deliverance. "If they who despised" the preaching of Noah, who was a mere man,

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 5–7; ii. 5, 9. [2] Psal. xxii. 27. Rev. xi. 15; xxi. 24; vii. 9.

and who does not seem to have been a worker of miracles, "died without mercy," receiving in the waters of the deluge "a just recompense of reward," "of how much sorer punishment shall they be counted worthy who trample on the Son of God, and do despite to the Spirit" in whom he comes to them; "neglecting so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Son of God, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him, God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" [1]

There was no mode of escape from the deluge of water but the divinely-appointed ark. It is not improbable that in the day of Divine visitation various plans were resorted to. Trees were climbed, no doubt; mountains ascended; possibly boats of some kind or other taken to: all in vain. The whole, with the exception of the eight in the ark, were engulfed in the deep and wide-spreading inundation, agitated with fearful tempest from the air, and heaved up into tremendous billows, by internal commotions shaking the earth. And there is no mode of escape for men from the coming fiery deluge which is to destroy the wicked, but in the redemption that is in Christ. "There is no name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus." He, and He only, saves from the wrath to come. To those who reject him, "there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, to destroy them as the adversaries of God." [2]

It only remains now that we endeavor to ascertain the object of the apostle's reference in noticing the particular manner in which Noah and his family were saved; they were "saved by water." The water of the deluge was, as we have already explained it, the means of their deliverance. The apostle himself has, in the 21st verse, informed us what is the point he meant to illustrate by this reference, though it must be acknowledged that it is not very easy to extract a clear and definite explanation from his words: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

It is rather remarkable that both those who deny the perpetuity of water-baptism as an ordinance, like that denomination of Christians so estimable on many accounts, the Friends, and those who, like the Papists and Puseyites, insist on the necessity and efficiency of water-baptism for salvation, if administered by properly qualified persons, equally seek in this passage for support to their opposite views; the one class insisting that it teaches that the baptism that saves—christian baptism—is not that which removes external pollution, that it is, not the application of water to the body—not an external rite at all; the other, that it teaches that baptism, which means here just what it means elsewhere—the religious rite known by that name, does save, is necessary, is effectual, to salvation. We shall find that the passage, rightly interpreted, gives no support to either of these equally erroneous, though by no means equally dangerous, opinions.

It has been doubted whether the apostle meant to compare baptism

[1] Heb. ii. 3, 4. [2] Acts iv. 12. Heb. x. 26, &c.

with the water of the deluge, or with the ark, or to compare generally the way in which Christians are saved with the way in which Noah and his family were saved; but, when the words are carefully examined, there is no room for these doubts. The translation of the words in our version is strictly literal according to the reading adopted, but it is not very intelligible. To the question, what does the expression, "the like figure whereunto even baptism" mean? I can give no answer. The words may be rendered with perfect accuracy, "which was a type or figure of the baptism which saves us;" that is, which water of the deluge is a type, or significant resemblance of baptism which saves us; for that it was a type, in the strict sense of the word, as foreshowing dimly to the antediluvians christian baptism, or its meaning, is a notion utterly without support.

It is, however, right to say, that there is another reading which, since the manuscripts of the New Testament have been more carefully collated than they had been when our excellent version was made, has been generally preferred by the most learned and judicious scholars, and which gives this rendering,[1] "which," referring to water, "which also saves us, baptism which corresponds to, or is figuratively represented by, the water of the deluge." It is as if the apostle had said, 'Water saved the family of Noah, and, it may be, said, water also saves us; I refer to baptism, which in this respect resembles the waters of the deluge, both being connected, by Divine appointment, with salvation or deliverance.'

How the water of the deluge was connected with the salvation of Noah's family we have already seen; how baptism is connected with our salvation we are now to inquire; and the apostle has answered the question both negatively and positively. But before entering on the consideration of his answer, it deserves remark, that the very comparison shows that baptism has but an indirect influence on our salvation, an influence which is emblematized not by the ark, but by the water, which, in itself, was rather fitted to destroy than to save.

Let us now hear the apostle. He first tells us how baptism does not save; it does not save us, as it is a "putting away of the filth of the flesh." That is the physical effect of the application of water to the body. It removes whatever soils the body, and produces cleanliness; this is all it can do as an external application. This does not, this cannot, save us. The idea that the external rite of baptism can save, can communicate spiritual life, can justify and regenerate, is equally absurd, unscriptural, and mischievous. Moral effects must have moral causes. It has been justly said, "Even the life of a plant or an animal, far more the life of thought, taste, affection, and conscience, cannot be produced by the use of mere lifeless matter. He who should assert this would be considered as little better than a madman; but is not the statement still more irrational and unintelligible, that the life of the soul, by which it is united to God and secured of salvation, is produced by sprinkling or pouring water on an individual, or by immersing him in it?" A man must be "given up to strong delusions," before he can "believe a lie like this."

The positive part of the apostle's answer is, however, the most im-

[1] The Textus Receptus gives ᾧ; Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, &c., give ὅ.

portant part of it. Baptism saves us, as it is "the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Before entering on the exposition of this statement, which is encumbered with some verbal difficulties, it will, I am persuaded, serve a good purpose to state in the fewest words, to whom, and to what, in the New Testament, salvation is attributed. God is said to save us. "All things are of him," in the new creation. He "is the Saviour of all men, specially of them who believe."[1] We are said to be saved "by grace," by "God's grace."[2] Christ is said to save us. "All things" in the new creation "are by him." One of his most common names is "our Saviour." The blood of Christ is said to save us. "Redemption is through his blood." The resurrection of Christ is said to save us. "We are saved by his life."[3] The Holy Spirit is said to save us. "We are saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost."[4] The gospel is said to save men. The words which Peter was to speak to Cornelius, were words which were to "save him and his family." We are said to be saved by faith. "By grace are ye saved, through faith." "Thy faith," said our Lord, on a number of occasions, "has saved thee." "He that believeth shall be saved."[5] Men are said to be saved by confession of the truth in connection with faith. "With the heart man believes to righteousness," that is, justification; "and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."[6] Men are said to be saved by baptism in connection with faith. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" and here "baptism saves us."[7]

Now, these statements are all perfectly consistent with each other; and he only understands how sinful men are saved, who sees the meaning, and apprehends the consistency, of these statements. Here they are in one sentence—God, in the exercise of sovereign grace, saves men through the mediation of his Son, who died as an atoning victim, and rose again to the possession of all power in heaven and earth, that he might save all coming to the Father by him, all who, being led by the operation of the Holy Spirit to believe the gospel of salvation, become personally interested in the blessings procured through the mediation of the Son; and, wherever men are made really to believe the gospel, they, as the natural result of that faith, and in obedience to the Divine command, make a profession of that faith; and in the case of those who in mature life are brought from a false religion to the knowledge and belief of the gospel, the commencement of this profession is baptism, or "the being washed with pure water."

If this statement is understood, there is little difficulty in answering the question, How does baptism save? It is an emblematical representation of what saves us,—the expiatory, justifying blood of Christ; the regenerating, sanctifying influence of the Spirit; and a corresponding confession of the truth thus represented.

Let us look at the apostle's answer, and see if it be not substantially the same as that to which we have been led. I stated to you that

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 10. [2] Eph. ii. 4, 5. [3] Eph. i. 7. Rom. v. 10.
[4] Tit. iii. 5. [5] Eph. ii. 8. Luke vii. 50; xviii. 42. Mark xvi. 16.
[6] Rom. x. 10. [7] Mark xvi. 16.

there were verbal difficulties. The principal of these are two:—the first referring to the meaning of the word rendered "answer;" and the other referring to the connection of the concluding clause, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The word rendered "answer"[1] occurs nowhere else, either in the New Testament or in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. From its etymology, and its use in classic writers, we should say its meaning is "question," not "answer." Many interpreters suppose that there is a reference to an ancient custom of making the baptismal profession in reply to questions put by the administrator, but we have no evidence that this practice existed in the apostle's time; and, though it had, the fact would not account for a word meaning "question" being used to signify "answer." Others have rendered it "inquiry," "application to," the application of a good conscience to God for salvation, the sincerely seeking salvation from God. I am persuaded that the word is here employed, as a word of very nearly the same meaning is, occasionally, in Greek writers, who use a similar dialect with the apostle,—as equivalent to expression, confession, or declaration.[2]

Some interpreters connect the concluding clause with the word *save*, "baptism saves us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ;" others with the phrase, "good conscience towards God;" others with the whole expression, "answer of a good conscience towards God." The second appears to me the most natural mode of connection. What the apostle's words bring before the mind is this: A man has a good conscience; he has obtained this good conscience by the resurrection of Christ; he makes a declaration of this good conscience in his baptism; and it is in this way that the apostle declares that baptism saves.

I had an opportunity some time ago of explaining to you, at some length, what it is to have a good conscience towards God. I stated that a good conscience is just a right and happy state of thought and feeling in reference to our relations and duties to God, confidence in God, love to God; and I showed you that this is obtained by the man's conscience being sprinkled with the atoning blood of Jesus, or, in other words, by his experiencing the power of Christ's atoning blood to pacify the conscience and purify the heart, through the faith of the truth respecting it; and by his being transformed through "the renewing of the mind," produced by "the Holy Ghost shed forth abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

This good conscience is said to be "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The resurrection of Christ is the grand proof of the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his doctrine, especially respecting the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice. It is truth regarding these, apprehended in its meaning and evidence under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which produces the good conscience towards God. "I trust in God, seeing he has brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. I love him who gave his Son for my offences, and who raised him again for my justification."

Of this good conscience, of a mind at peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, a heart with the love of God shed abroad in it, the

[1] Ἐπερώτημα. [2] See note F.

converted Jew or Pagan made a profession when, in obedience to the command of Christ, he submitted to baptism. Thus confessing, by an external act, what he believed in his heart, that God had raised Christ from the dead, he was saved. In this way, in this way alone, can it be said that "baptism saves us." [1]

Much ingenuity has been discovered in attempting to trace the analogy between the waters of the deluge saving Noah's family, and the water of baptism saving those who in it make an enlightened profession of "a good conscience towards God, through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ." I apprehend we are not to seek anything more than that general analogy which we have already illustrated. The following illustration is at any rate ingenious, and the sentiment it conveys indubitably true and awfully important. "The flood of waters displayed the Divine indignation, and executed the threatened vengeance against the wickedness of an ungodly world, while they yet bore up in safety the eight persons enclosed in the ark; so the blood of Christ shed for sin, emblematically represented in baptism, while it has effected the eternal redemption and salvation of all in him, the remnant according to the election of grace, is at the same time the most awful manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, as well as the surest pledge of its execution against the world which lieth under the wicked one." [2] I have thus concluded my illustrations of this interesting and somewhat difficult passage.

Though I do not think we have been able to clear the difficult passage we have been considering of all its obscurity, I think we have succeeded to a considerable extent; and I am sure we have made it plain enough, that what Paul says of all scripture given by Divine inspiration, is true of this. It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." I have left myself little time to show you the practical use we should make of it. I shall only notice one very important practical conclusion to which it very directly leads us,—the folly and danger of trusting in the mere external rite of baptism, or in anything that is external. Happily we are not taught the soul-deluding doctrine of the intrinsic efficacy of the sacraments, as they are called, and of baptismal regeneration, as part of that general dogma. On the contrary, we are taught that "the sacraments become effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in themselves, or in those who administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in those who by faith receive them;" and that no baptism saves, except that which is connected with "engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the covenant of grace, and is an engagement to be the Lord's." [3]

But though we are thus taught, and I believe few of us would call this teaching in question, yet there is a natural tendency in the human mind to rest on what is external. Let us beware, then, of supposing that we are safe because we have been baptized, whether in infancy or on our personal profession of faith. The apostle's doctrine respecting circumcision and Judaism is equally true of baptism and Christianity. He is not a true Christian who is one outwardly; nei-

[1] See note G. [2] John Walker. Essays and Correspondence. Vol. ii. p. 107.
[3] Westminster Shorter Catechism.

ther is that saving baptism which consists merely in the application of water to the body. He is a Christian who is one inwardly, who has the good conscience towards God; and saving baptism is the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Let all remember that if they would be saved—enter into the kingdom of God, they "must be born again," "born not of water only, but of the Spirit."[1] And let all who have made profession of a good conscience remember, that where there is a good conscience there will be a good conversation; and that, if "a man be in Christ a new creature," he will "put off the old man, who is corrupt in his deeds, and put on the new man, who, after Christ Jesus, is renewed in knowledge and in true holiness." Professing to be saved, from the fiery deluge which is coming on the unbelieving, disobedient, world, by the blood of Christ represented in baptism, he will show that, by the same precious blood, he is delivered from that world's power; redeemed from "the vain conversation received by tradition from his fathers." Freed from spiritual captivity, he will walk at liberty; and, brought into a new world, all old things will pass away, and "all things become new."

I cannot persuade myself to close this discourse, without dropping a word or two of warning to those "spirits in prison," of whom there are so many in our world, of whom I am afraid there may be some in this assembly, who, though the great Emancipator is present preaching peace and liberty, are yet disobedient, clinging to their chains, and refusing to come forth from their prison-house. I beseech them to consider that the long-suffering of God will not always wait for them, and that the deluge of fire will as certainly come as the deluge of water has come.

Oh! think, what must be the issue of this course of yours? "Is it a light matter to you to die in your sins, and to have the wrath of God forever abiding in you? Think you that it is a light matter to have refused Christ so often, and that after you have been so often requested to receive salvation? after the Lord has followed you with entreaties, hath called so often, 'Why will ye die?' yet wilfully to perish? Would you willingly die in this state? Oh! think, then, he is yet speaking peace; yet waiting, if at length you will return. This is one day more of his waiting and of his speaking to you here; but it may be the last day. For you the flood of fire may come to-morrow. You may die to-night, and, as death leaves you, judgment will find you. Oh! that ye were wise, and would consider your latter end. Why wear out the day of grace, as careless about Christ, as uncertain about salvation, as ever? As you love your souls, be serious in this matter. This was the undoing of the spirits in prison in the days of Noah. They were all for present things; they ate and drank, married and were given in marriage; they were exclusively occupied with things seen and temporal, drowned in them, and that drowned in a flood. Noah ate and drank, too; but his main work was the preparation of the ark. The necessities of life, the children of God are tied to. They must give some time and attention to them; but the thing that takes up their hearts, that which the bent of their souls

[1] John iii. 1–8.

is set on, is an interest in Jesus Christ. All your wise designs are but pleasing madness, till this becomes you chief concern also. Others have had your privileges, and abused them; they might have obeyed the gospel, and obtained salvation; but they were disobedient, and are lost, lost forever. And all they set their heart on has passed away as a shadow; they have nothing of it but the bitter reflection, that they sold their souls for a thing of naught."[1]

Will you follow them? You must to the grave, and that soon; but will you follow them to hell? Stop! Consider! Believe, obey the gospel. Now, now is the accepted time. He who listens to this call shall find, amidst the overflowing flood of Divine vengeance, in the blessed GOD-MAN, "a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest," and "shall be safe in that day of evil."

NOTE A. p. 479.

From the Talmudical writers, it appears that the dead body was not hung by the neck, but by the hands; and that it was hung, not on "a tree" properly called, but ἐπὶ ξύλου, on a piece of timber or stake,—Mischna, c. vi.; Gem. Babyl. Sanhed. c. vi. fol. 45, col. 2; edit. Amstel. The manner of hanging is thus described by one of these writers:—"They fix a stake in the earth, and out of that stake comes a piece of timber; and both the hands placed together are tied, and by them the executioner hangs the body up."—THEOD. DASSOVIUS. Dissertatio de suspendio hominis lapidibus obruti ad, Gal. iii. 13; Deut. xxi. 22.

NOTE B. p. 490.

In bringing about the change referred to, the chief agent employed by Providence has been the Rev. ADAM THOMSON, D.D., of Coldstream. Few men have been honored in a higher degree than this public-spirited minister of Christ. Through his instrumentality, that Word of God, which its Author glorifies above all his name; that Word which is able to make men wise unto salvation—which was, to a certain extent in this country, "bound"—now runs, has free course, and is glorified. May nothing henceforth stop its course!

NOTE C. p. 510.

These are well-weighed words of the candid and learned Joachim Camerarius, a man every way worthy of being Melancthon's friend:—"Est hic unus ex iis locis sacrarum literarum, de quibus pietas religiosa quærere amplius et dubitare quid dicatur, sine reprehensione: et de quibus diversæ etiam sententiæ admitti posse videantur, dummodo non detorqueatur κανὼν τοῦ τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν, id est, religiosa de fide consensio, neque aberretur, ἀπὸ τῆς ἀναλογίας τῆς πίστεως." Luther's remarks, characteristic as they are, do not merit the same eulogium:—"Hac tam horribili pœna Petrus Apostolus quoque motus videtur, ut non aliter quam fanaticus loquatur talia verba, quæ ne hodie quidem, a nobis intelligi possunt."—1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. "Mirabile profecto judicium, et vox pæne fanatica."—LUTH. Exeg. Opp. Latt. tom. ii. p. 221. I do not know that we can make any better apology for the rashness of the great reformer, than to confess with Langé, the worthy father-in-law of the learned and judicious Rambach, "virum optimum aliquid humani passum esse;" and that what he says, "ex affectu potius, quam verbis æstimandum esse."

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[1] Leighton.

Note D. p. 511.

Wiclif is uniform in his rendering "made dede *in* fleisch, but made quyk *in* spirit; he cam *in* spirit," &c. So is Tyndale, so far as the repeated mention of spirit is concerned: "Was kylled as pertayning to the flesshe; but was quykened *in* the sprete, *in* which sprete he also went," &c. Cranmer repeats Tyndale, as does the Genevan, with some slight orthographical changes. The Rhemists, in the first part of the rendering, are nearer the truth than any of them: "*Mortified* certes *in* flesh, but quickened *in* spirit; *in* the which spirit," &c.

Note E. p. 512.

A pretty full account of the diversified opinions referred to in this and the following paragraph, is to be found in the third excursus appended to the second fasciculus of Pott's "Commentary on the Catholic Epistles," forming the ninth volume of the "Editio Koppiana" of the Greek New Testament. It is entitled, "Variæ interpretum, de descensu Jesu Christi ad inferos, sententiæ secundum temporum ordinem enumerantur, et breviter dijudicantur: nostraque interpretatio, copiosius explicatur." Bishop Horsley belongs to the more reasonable portion of this class. His defence of his view of the passage, like everything he did, bears the mark of power, both imaginative and ratiocinative; but, like many things he did, it is lamentably deficient in sober thinking and conclusive argument. It is a happy thing that Priestley had other confuters, and the divinity of Christ other defenders, than the Bishop of Rochester.

"Christus dum in terris vixit paucos Judæos convertit: at post mortem et resurrectionem suam, per spiritum profectus prædicavit spiritibus qui erant in carcere, 1 Pet. iii. 19; id est gentibus quæ sedebant in umbra mortis constrictæ compedibus, atque catenis tenebrarum et ignorantiæ, easque imperio ac regimini suo subjecit."—Wolzogenius, Com. in Evang. Joan. ch. xiv. 12. Bib. Pol. Frat. tom. viii. p. 963.

"Quæstio quam mihi proposuisti ex Epistola Apostoli Petri solet nos, ut te latere non arbitror, vehementissime commovere, quomodo illa verba accipienda sint, tanquam de inferis dicta. Replico ergo tibi eandem quæstionem, ut sive ipse potueris, sive aliquem qui possit inveneris, auferas de illa atque finias dubitationem meam. Multa millia hominum qui Deum ignorantes, et dæmonum vel simulachrorum cultui dediti a temporibus Noe usque ad passionem Christi, ex hac vita emigrarunt quos apud inferos Christus inveniens, quomodo illis non prædicavit sed illis tantum qui in diebus Noe increduli fuerunt, cum fabricaretur arca? Aut si omnibus prædicavit cur illos solos Petrus commemoravit, prætermissa multitudine tam innumerabili cæterorum? Quinam isti (spiritus in carcere) sint temerarium est definire. Cur Petrus eos tantum commemorare voluerit quibus in carcere inclusis evangelium prædicatum est, qui in diebus Noe cum fabricaretur arca increduli fuerunt vides quam latebrosum sit—et quæ me moveant, ne affirmare hinc aliquid audeam. His dictis subnectit. 'Proper hoc enim et mortuis Evangelizatum est,' &c. Quem non moveat ista profunditas? . . . . Considera tamen ne forte totum illud quod de conclusis in carcere spiritibus qui in diebus Noe non crediderant, Petrus Apostolus dicit, omnino ad inferos non pertineat, sed ad illa potius tempora, quorum formam ad hæc tempora transtulit. Illa quippe res gesta forma fuerat futurorum, ut ii qui modo non credunt Evangelio, dum in omnibus gentibus ædificatur ecclesia, illis intelligantur esse similes qui tunc non crediderunt cum fabricaretur arca. Illi autem qui crediderunt et per baptismum salvi fiunt, illis comparentur qui tunc in eadem arca salvi facti sunt per aquam. Fieri potest ut mortuos dixerit infideles, hoc est, in anima mortuos. Proinde etiam quod sequitur 'propter hoc et mortuis Evangelizatum est, ut judicentur quidem secundum homines in carne, vivant autem secundum Deum spiritu' non cogit apud inferos intelligi. Propterea enim in hac vita, et mortuis, Evangelizatum est, id est, infidelibus et iniquis, ut cum crediderunt judicentur quidem secundum homines in carne; hoc est in diversis tribulationibus et in ipsa morte carnis. Hæc expositio verborum Petri cui displicet, vel cui etiam si non displicet non tamen sufficit, quærat ea secundum inferos intelligere: qui si valuerit, illa quibus me moveri supra commemoravi ita solvere ut eorum auferat dubitationem, impertiat et mihi."—Augustini, Epistolæ. Ep. xcix. p. 500–511. 8vo. Ludg. 1561.

The article in τῷ πνεύματι, ch. iii. 18, according to the textus receptus, is rejected from the text by Wetstein, Griesbach, Matthæi, Scholz, and Lachmann. Bishop Middleton considers the true rendering of θανατωθεὶς σαρκὶ, ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι, as "dead carnally, but alive spiritually."—Doctrine of the Greek Article, p. 618.

Note F. p. 547.

Beausobre's note is worth quoting. Ἐπερώτημα, "L'Ame," dit Tertullian, "n'est sanctifiée par le lavement, mais par la confession."—"Anima enim non lavatione sed responsione sancitur" pro sanctificatur. Je soupçonne que Tertullien a bien reconté. En effect, on trouve ce mot (Ερώτημα) dans cette signification. Καὶ ὁ νόμος αὐτῷ πίστος ὡς ἐρώτημα δηλῶν. Eccles. xxxiii. 3. "La loi de Dieu sera pour un homme qui le craint, aussi fidèle que la response de l'Oracle."

The opinion of the learned and judicious Winer deserves also to be cited:—"Ἐπερώτᾶν *can* signify *stipulari*, but ἐπερωτᾶσθαι is necessarily *promittere*, as also the glossaries teach. The answer to the question proposed (formally or implicitly) would be here the principal subject. Ἐπερώτημα, derived from the active voice, would here be altogether without meaning. The proposed question was not that which brings felicity: it must be taken passively, and be derived from ἐπερωτᾶσθαι, *promittere*. More simply, and in accordance with biblical usage, we may translate σ. α. ε. ε. Θ. the inquiry of a good conscience after God—comp. 2 Sam. xi. 7." This more simple mode of exegesis does not commend itself to my mind. Neander, after stating that the confession of faith made by catechumens at baptism was in answer to distinct questions, remarks in a note, "According to the most natural interpretation, 1 Pet. iii. 21, has reference to the question proposed at baptism,—Ἐπερώτημα, metonymice, for the pledge in answer to the question."—Gen. Ch. Hist. vol. i. p. 421.

Note G. p. 548.

From this declaration the conclusion has been drawn, that none are fit subjects of baptism but such as have "the good conscience," and can give the corresponding "answer" or profession. The conclusion, though plausible, is not warranted. The Apostle Paul states, that, 'the true circumcision before God, is not the outward circumcision of the flesh, but the inward circumcision of the heart and spirit.'—Rom. ii. 29. But it would be a false conclusion, 'therefore Jewish infants, who are not capable of that spiritual circumcision, or of the profession of it, ought not to be circumcised.' The fair conclusion from Paul's statement is, no uncircumcised adult should be admitted to circumcision who does not seem to have the circumcision of the heart. The fair conclusion from Peter's is, no unbaptized adult should be admitted to baptism without seeming to have the good conscience, and making profession of it. Whether any infants, and if any, what infants may be baptized, is a question which must be determined by its own evidence. We know that the infants of Jews were the proper subjects of circumcision, notwithstanding the declaration in Rom. ii. 29: And the infants of Christians *may* be proper subjects of baptism, notwithstanding the declaration made here. Whether they are so, is a question on which good men are divided; and everything is a step towards their agreement, which distinctly marks what has, and what has not, a bearing on its determination. If the irrelevant arguments on both sides were put aside, the satisfactory decision of this question, which has causelessly divided the Church of Christ, and produced a great deal of unchristian feeling, would be greatly facilitated.

DISCOURSE XVII.

EXHORTATION TO HOLINESS BASED ON THE ATONEMENT.

1 Pet. iv. 1–6.—Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

The paragraph now read presents us with a very important theme of consideration. It directs us to the practical use which we should habitually make of that great fundamental principle of Christianity, "that Christ, the just One, suffered in the room of the unjust, that he might bring them to God." It teaches us to use it as the most serviceable piece of armor, whether defensive or offensive, that we can employ in the spiritual conflict, on which, as Christians, we profess to have entered; that which, in the preceding context, is represented as the expiation of our guilt, the price of our pardon, the ground of our hope, being here exhibited as also the means of our sanctification, the strongest motive, the most cheering encouragement, to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God;" to "put off the old man, who is corrupt, and put on the new man, which, after God," that is, in the image of God, "is created in righteousness and true holiness;" [1] or, as the apostle has it here, "to live no longer the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

The words of the text are so obviously and so intimately related to those which immediately precede them, that we cannot help considering the commencement of a new chapter here as injudicious, and as fitted rather to obscure the sense: the natural place for a division being plainly the close of the eleventh verse. The long, and somewhat involved, sentence, which I have read (for it is one sentence), is a following up of the statement which had been made respecting the sufferings of Christ, in their nature, design, and consequences, by an exhortation enforced by two appropriate motives. The exhortation is contained in the second part of the first verse, and in the whole of the second; and the first motive is adduced in the third, fourth, and

[1] Eph. iv. 24. Κατὰ Θεόν.

fifth verses, and the second in the sixth verse. This is clearly the general division of the passage; and even this general view of the construction of the passage will be found useful in guiding our inquiries into its meaning.

Interpreters have been a good deal perplexed, both as to the manner in which the various clauses are connected with each other, and as to the meaning which severally and conjointly they are intended to express. I have never conversed with an intelligent Christian, acquainted merely with our English version of the passage, who has not complained of its obscurity, and acknowledged, that while most, though by no means all, of the expressions, seemed clear enough when taken singly, and many of the clauses viewed separately had an obvious meaning, he had failed in his attempts to obtain a consistent and satisfactory view of the whole; and I could not very readily point such a person to any interpretation of the passage where he would find a complete solution of his doubts and difficulties.

I have no doubt the passage has often been read without the perception of any difficulty; but that is only a proof how inattentive many readers of the Bible are to the command of its Author, "He that readeth let him understand." It is good to observe difficulties; it is the first step towards having them removed. It may be said, I believe it is often thought, an unobserved difficulty can do no harm; but this is a mistake, for it may lead into error; at any rate, it must prevent us from apprehending the truth, and from obtaining from it the practical advantages it is intended to communicate.

There is no difficulty in the first clause, "Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh," bearing, as it plainly does, on the statements respecting the sufferings of Christ, in their nature, design, and results, contained in the five concluding verses of the preceding chapter: "That He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; and that having become dead in the flesh he was quickened in the Spirit, and came and preached to the spirits who were in prison; and being raised from the dead is gone into heaven, and, seated at the right hand of God, has angels, and principalities, and powers subjected to him;" and referring to that statement as the basis on which the apostle is about to place the following exhortation. This is sufficiently plain; but the difficulties immediately commence, and they come in considerable number and close succession.

"Arm yourselves with the same mind." With what mind? If it be answered, with the mind or disposition of Christ, the question returns, But what is said about his mind or disposition in the context? Absolutely nothing. His sufferings are spoken of; their nature, their design, their results are particularly referred to, but there is nothing said of his mind, his temper, or disposition. Had the words "Arm yourselves with the same mind," followed the very similar passage in chapter ii. 21–24: "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously," we should at once have seen the connection. The exhortation would have seemed to rise naturally out of the

statement, "Forasmuch as Christ has *thus* suffered, arm yourselves with the same mind" when ye are called to suffer. But here the exhortation is not to imitate Christ in suffering, but to make the fact of his having suffered, a piece of armor, offensive and defensive, in our conflicts with our spiritual adversaries.

Then come the words, "For he that suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of the time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Here are a host of perplexities. Who is this that has "suffered in the flesh and ceased from sin?" Is it Christ, who in the beginning of the verse is said to have "suffered for us in the flesh?" That certainly is the meaning naturally suggested by the construction; but what can be meant by Christ's ceasing from sin? and, more extraordinary still, what can be meant by his ceasing from sin, "that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." How could he cease from sin who never began to sin? He never lived any part "of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men." He was always "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" [1] he always "lived to the will of God." It was "his meat to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work." [2] And if "he who suffers in the flesh" be any one who suffers bodily affliction, or any Christian who suffers bodily affliction for Christ's cause—and it has been supposed to mean all these by different interpreters—still, we ask, how do any or all of these "cease from sin?" Is bodily affliction a furnace, which uniformly and entirely separates the dross from the precious metal in the human character? Does a man need only to be made sufficiently miserable in order to his becoming sufficiently holy? And, were this insuperable difficulty got over, what is meant by a man ceasing from sin, "that he may no longer live to the lusts of men?" Is not that very like an assertion, that he ceases from sin that he may cease from sin? And then, what bearing has this strange declaration on the exhortation, "Arm yourselves with the same mind;" of which it seems brought forward as an enforcement?

And then, looking forward to the conclusion of this sentence, the darkness becomes darkness that may be felt. What is the meaning of "the gospel being preached to them who are dead?" what is meant by those dead being "judged according to men in the flesh?" what by their "living according to God in the Spirit?" And what connection have these two things with what they seem to be assigned as the reason for; either the general judgment, or Christians avoiding sin and cultivating holiness?

I readily acknowledge that to some of these questions I cannot give a satisfactory answer; and from the whole sentence, as it stands in our version, it does not seem possible to extract a consistent and pertinent meaning. It is not wonderful that some of the most learned and acute interpreters have honestly confessed that they did not understand it. It is more wonderful and less creditable that many expositors slur over the matter, and leave their readers equally uninformed, so far as they are concerned, as to the existence of difficulties,

[1] Heb. vii. 26. [2] John iv. 34.

or the means of lessening or removing them. I do not know that they can all be removed. I am persuaded many of them may.

A few remarks on the meaning of a word or two, and on the construction of one or two clauses, will, I am persuaded, go far to remove all difficulty from the first and second verses, and to make them a clear expression of an obviously just and important thought, of a consistent and pertinent sentiment. The first remark as to the meaning of a word is this—that the term rendered "mind" [1] which is, to say the least, not its usual meaning, should have been translated in a sense which it very commonly bears—"thought." "Arm yourselves with this same thought;" and if you ask what same thought, the first remark as to the construction of the clauses will give a satisfactory answer; the words that immediately follow contain the thought: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased, or rather, has been made to rest from sin;" [2] the particle rendered *for* [3] being translated, as it very frequently is, *that*—thus, "Arm yourselves with this same thought, that He who hath suffered in the flesh, has been made to rest from sin." [4] This is the same thought referred to in the commencement of the verse, and more fully brought out in the concluding verses of the preceding chapter.

As to the construction of the words, we have to remark that the second verse is not to be considered as connected directly with the words which immediately precede it, but with the exhortation, "Arm yourselves with this same thought;" and expresses the end to be sought by that means. It is the reply to the inquiry, For what purpose are we to arm ourselves with this same thought? It deserves notice, that there is nothing in the words themselves restricting them either to the first, second, or third person.[5] They are literally, "in order to the no longer living the rest of the time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." There follow in the next four verses two motives, urging compliance with the exhortation,—the first contained in the third, fourth, and fifth verses; the second contained in the sixth.

The whole passage, then, stands thus: "Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with this same thought, that He who hath suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin." And why arm yourselves with this thought? "that ye may no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." And why not live the rest of your time to the lusts of men, but to the will of God? (1.) "Because the time passed of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you, who shall give account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead; and (2.) Because for this cause was the gospel preached to them who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

Viewed in this way, the sentence hangs well together, and exhibits a clear, consistent, and important meaning. Its general plan and

[1] Ἔννοια. [2] Πέπαυται. [3] Ὅτι. [4] See note A.
[5] Εἰς τὸ μηκέτι ἀνθρώπων ἐπιθυμίαις ἀλλὰ θελήματι Θεοῦ τὸν ἐπίλοιπον ἐν σαρκὶ βιῶσαι χρόνον.

object thus become apparent, and much of the obscurity resting on particular words and phrases is dispersed.

There is, first, the brief recapitulatory statement of what had just been stated at greater length, which was required to lay a foundation for the exhortation which the apostle is just about to give forth: "Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, so suffered as to have died, and been raised from the dead, and placed at God's right hand; seeing Christ hath *thus* suffered in the flesh for us"—

Then comes, secondly, the exhortation itself, "Arm yourselves with this same thought, that he who has suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin, in order that ye may no longer live your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." The exhortation calls on them to seek a particular end by a particular means; to engage in a particular course of conduct, which is described both negatively and positively; negatively as not living to the lusts of men, positively as living to the will of God; and to cultivate a particular mode of thinking, in order to their successfully following out this mode of acting, "arming themselves with this thought, he that hath suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin." The first exhortation is—"No longer live your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God;" the second—"Arm yourselves with this same thought, that he who has suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin," in order that you may avoid the one, and follow the other of these two modes of conduct.

Then there are, thirdly, the motives which the apostle urges on them to induce them to comply with this exhortation. The first refers, chiefly, to the course they should abandon, and brings forward its criminal and disgraceful character, the strange infatuation and waywardness of those who walk in it, and the awful responsibility in which they are involved. It is the "way of the Gentiles;" it consists in "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries;" then they who walk in it, are so infatuated as to "wonder that you do not run with them into the same excess of riot," and "speak evil of you on that account;" and, finally, "they must give account of themselves to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Surely this is not a way to walk in. We should never have walked in it; we have walked in it too long; we must walk in it no longer. The second motive refers, principally, to the way that they should follow. To bring men into this way, and keep them in this way, is the great design of preaching the gospel. "For, for this cause was the gospel preached to them who are dead, that they may be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." Some of the phraseology in which this motive is couched, is by no means easy of explication; but that it does express a motive to the duty enjoined, and that that motive is, substantially, that the great design why the gospel is preached is, to lead men to the discharge of that duty, cannot reasonably be questioned. This, then, is the general division of the subject, according to which I mean to arrange my subsequent illustrative remarks.

These preliminary observations have been longer than I could have wished; but if they have, in any measure, gained their object,

of enabling us better to understand a confessedly difficult, and an obviously important, passage of Scripture, neither you nor I will have cause to regret their length. That man does not rightly estimate the value of the pure ore of divine truth, who grudges the labor that is necessary to dig out of the mine, and separate it from rubbish; and who, when he in any good measure succeeds, does not "rejoice as one who findeth great spoil." I am not without hope that we shall find this passage, though at first sight beset with so many difficulties, in no ordinary degree rich in christian doctrine, and law, and motive; "profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness."

I.—THE BASIS OF THE EXHORTATION.

The first branch of the subject—THE GREAT PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH, "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh," which the apostle lays down as the basis of his exhortation, need not detain us long, as we have in our last discourse considered, at great length, the full announcement of it, in the close of the last chapter, on which the more abbreviated statement in the text plainly reduplicates. It is a summary of all that is most peculiar and important in the religion of Christ, a comprehensive epitome of the gospel of our salvation. It is that which Paul first received and first declared to the churches, assuring them that it was that gospel, which, if they received it, and kept it in memory, would certainly save the soul.[1] Its import may be thus briefly stated.

Christ, the long-promised, divinely-appointed, divinely-qualified, divinely-accredited, divine Saviour, in human nature has endured numerous, varied, violent, severe sufferings, terminating in death.

These sufferings were penal, "for sins," being the execution of the penal sanction of the divine law, the manifestation of the displeasure of God against sin. He was made sin, he became a curse.

These sufferings were vicarious. They were not for his own sins, for he had none, but for the sins of men. "He suffered, the just in the room of the unjust." He "became a curse" in the room of the accursed. "We all like sheep had gone astray; we had turned every one to his own way; and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was on him."

These sufferings were expiatory. In them the penalty was not only borne, but borne away. He made an end of sin, by making reconciliation for iniquity. "He took away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "He is the propitiation for our sins," and he is "set forth a propitiation;" and the righteousness of God, in the remission of sins, is thus declared, "God being just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus."

The design of these penal, vicarious, and expiatory sufferings of the divinely-appointed, divinely-qualified, divinely-accredited, divine Saviour, is to bring men to God; to restore ignorant and deluded

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.

man to the true knowledge of God, guilty man to the favor of God, depraved man to the image of God, and miserable man to the enjoyment of God, thus making him truly wise, truly good, and truly happy forever.

Finally, while these sufferings terminated in the death of the incarnate Saviour, they obtained for him, as their merited reward, that spiritual power which he exerts through the preaching of the gospel, in giving liberty to the spiritually enslaved, and life to the spiritually dead; and a seat at God's right hand in the Heaven of heavens, angels, and principalities, and powers, being made subject to him. Such is the great truth referred to by the apostle in the words "Christ has suffered for us in the flesh," and which he lays down as the basis on which he builds an exhortation to universal holiness, "holiness in all manner of conversation."

II.—THE EXHORTATION.

That EXHORTATION forms the second division of our subject, to the consideration of which we now proceed. It is contained in these words: "Arm yourselves with this same thought, that He who hath suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin, that ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." The exhortation, as I have already had occasion to remark, is twofold; the apostle calls on them to use certain means in order to secure a certain end; to cultivate a particular mode of thinking that they may follow a particular course of conduct; to arm themselves with an influential thought that they may perform a difficult work. It will, I believe, subserve the purpose of clear exposition, if we consider the two parts of the exhortation in the inverse order in which they are presented to us in the text; that we first consider the course of conduct which the apostle would have Christians to pursue, and then the means he would have them to employ in order that they may follow that course of conduct.

§ 1.—*The particular object to be sought—negative—positive.*

The course of conduct which the apostle would have Christians to pursue, is described in these words: "No longer live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but live[1] the rest of your time in the flesh to the will of God." The exhortation, you perceive, is both negative and positive. It forbids one course of conduct and enjoins another.

(1.) *Negative.—"Not to live to the lusts of men."*

The negative exhortation plainly proceeds on the principle, that in the former part of their lives, previously to their conversion, they had been distinguished by a mode of conduct not only different from, but directly opposite to, that by which they ought henceforward to be characterized; they had done what they are now not to do; they had not done what they are now to do; they had lived the former

[1] Βιῶσαι. Aptum verbum: non dicitur de brutis.—BENGEL.

part of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men, and not to the will of God. It is of great importance that Christians should keep habitually in mind their state and character previous to conversion; "that they should often look to the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were dug."[1] It is fitted to hide pride from their eyes, to excite gratitude, to deepen the sense of obligation. To gain these ends God's ancient people were often put in mind of their humble origin, and their enslaved state in Egypt; and Christians are frequently, directly and indirectly, called on to reflect on the state of error and guilt and condemnation and spiritual enslavement from which they have been delivered. "Once were ye darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk in the light."

"Such were some of you," says the apostle, after giving a list of enormous transgressors; "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." "In time past," says he, speaking to those who had been, in the great love wherewith the God who is rich in mercy had loved them, quickened together with Christ, and made to sit together in heavenly places in him, "ye were dead in trespasses and sins; ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also, we all had our conversation in time past, in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." "Remember," says he, "that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and being without God in the world."[2] And here the apostle, not the less impressively because indirectly, reminds the Christians to whom he wrote, that they had spent the former part of their lives in rebellion against God, and in base subjection to his and their enemies.

"The time in the flesh" is an expression just equivalent to the period of our mortal life. During the past part of this life, previous to their conversion, they had lived "not to the will of God, but to the lusts of men." To live to the will of God, is to live according to the will of God, to make the will of God the supreme rule and the ultimate reason of our sentiments and conduct. In his unconverted state no man does this. He is ignorant and misinformed as to the will of God, and no way disposed to seek after more extended or accurate information on this subject. He does "not like to retain God in his knowledge;" and when God presses the truth respecting his will on such a man's notice, he turns away, saying in his heart, "Let me alone," "depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy will or thy ways." In most cases, in forming a determination as to a course of conduct, the question, 'Is the course resolved on agreeable to, or inconsistent with, the will of God?' is never put. God is not in all the thoughts. Nor is this the worst of it; for there are cases in which the man is, from circumstances, compelled to admit into his calculations the element of conformity or disconformity with the will

[1] Isa. li. 1, 2. [2] Eph. v. 8. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Eph. ii. 1, 2, 11, 12.

of God; and then, instead of giving it its proper place, which is that of supreme control, he deliberately sets it aside, and proceeds to choose and to act in direct opposition to what he knows to be the Divine will, choosing and doing what he knows God disapproves, and rejecting and refusing to do what he knows God approves.

And while thus not living to the will of God, he is living "to the lusts of men." The lusts of men are just the desires whereby mankind in their fallen state are characterized; some of them sinful in themselves, others of them innocent in themselves, but faulty from excess or misdirection; all of them unfitted for a purpose which they were never meant to answer, to be the regulating principle of conduct. And to live to these desires is just to make them the rule and reason of what we do; to spend life in endeavoring to obtain the gratification of these desires, seeking to conform ourselves to our own natural inclinations; "fashioning ourselves," as the apostle phrases it in the first chapter of this Epistle, "according to our former lusts in our ignorance;" forming our character entirely under their influence, and the influence of their objects, present and sensible things, "things seen and temporal;" or seeking to conform ourselves to those desires as reigning in and manifested by others, being "conformed to this world," embracing commonly prevalent opinions, regulating ourselves by commonly prevalent maxims, just because they are commonly prevalent, "walking according to the course of this world; and, while obstinately refusing to be servants of God in living to his will, basely becoming the slaves of men by living to their lusts. This is a true account of the mode of life of every unrenewed man. It was once the mode of life of those to whom the apostle is writing. It was once the mode of life of every true Christian. It is the mode of life of vast multitudes of professed Christians still.

But, says the apostle to the strangers scattered abroad, this must be your mode of life no longer. Now that ye are "in Christ," ye must become "new creatures; old things must pass away, and all things must become new."[1] You must no more live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. "Worldly desires," whether in yourselves or in others, are not to be the guiding principles of your conduct. You are not, because you desire, or other men desire, a particular object, to set about forthwith to endeavor to obtain it. You are to bring all your own desires, and all the desires of others, viewed as influencing your choice and conduct, before the tribunal of a higher principle; and, according to its awards, you are to refuse, or modify, or gratify them. Where they are condemned, they are, as existing in ourselves, to be sought to be weakened and destroyed; cut off, though apparently useful as a right hand; pulled out, though felt to be dear as a right eye; and cast from us as an abominable and pernicious thing; and, as existing in others, they are not to be complied with, but steadily resisted. And even where they are not sinful in their nature, but merely in danger of becoming exorbitant in their demands, they are never to be permitted to be the guide of our conduct, the controlling power of action. Christians are not to "obey sin by the desires of the body, yielding their members to it

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17.

as the instruments of unrighteousness." They are not to "make provision for the flesh to fulfil its desires;" on the contrary, they are to "mortify their members that are on the earth;" they are to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;" they are to "deny themselves;" they are not to be "conformed to this present world;" and they are to turn away from them "who walk after their own ungodly desires;" they are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them." They are not to "walk as men," but as Christians; not as "born of the flesh," but as "born of the Spirit." [1]

(2.) *Positive—"To live to the will of God."*

The principle which is to guide their conduct and fashion their character, and which is to control and direct the desires, whether in themselves or others, as principles of their conduct, is "the will of God." They are to live the rest of their time in the flesh, "to the will of God," that is, according to the will of God. Not human desire, either in ourselves or others, but Divine will, is to be the rule and reason of our conduct.

The will of God is the rule of his own conduct. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." "He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." His will is the law of all inanimate and irrational being. "He has established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to his ordinance, for all are his servants." This will is the rule and the reason of the conduct of all holy, intelligent beings. The angels that excel in strength, "do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word; they are his ministers that do his pleasure." [2] This will should be the rule and reason of the conduct of all intelligent beings.

The will of God can be the rule and reason of the conduct of intelligent beings, only in the degree in which it is revealed to, and known by, them. The secret will of God, or what we ordinarily term his decrees, so far as unrevealed, cannot be the guide of our conduct. But when his will becomes apparent in his providential dispensations, then it is our duty to submit to it with unmurmuring acquiescence, however opposed to our natural inclination, saying, "It is the Lord; let him do with us what seemeth good in his sight. The will of the Lord be done. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." [3]

It is however his *will*, as made known in his *word*, that is to be the chief, the paramount rule of our conduct. He has, in the Scriptures of truth, "showed us what is good and what he requires of us;" "his good, and acceptable, and perfect will." [4] He has declared to us what is true, and what is right; and it ought to be our habitual endeavor to ascertain what he has declared to be true, that we may believe it; what he has declared to be right, that we may do it. To the ques-

[1] Matt. v. 29, 30; xviii. 8. Rom. vi. 12, 13; xiii. 14. Col. iii. 5. Gal. v. 24. Matt. xvi. 24. Rom. xii. 2. 2 Tim. iii. 5. Eph. v. 11. 2 Cor. iii. 3. John iii. 4.
[2] Eph. i. 11. Dan. iv. 35. Psal. cxix. 90; ciii. 20, 21.
[3] 1 Sam. iii. 18. Acts xxi. 14. Matt. vi. 10. [4] Micah vi. 8. Rom. xii. 2.

tion, may we do this? we should reply by the question, does the revelation of his will permit it? To the question, must we do this? by the question does the revelation of his will require it? And no amount of opposite influence, from whatever quarter it may come, whether from inclination, or interest, or general opinion, must be permitted to induce us to do what that revelation says we may not do, or to neglect what it says we must do. "Whatsoever we do, whether in word or in deed, we must do it as to the Lord, and not as to men;" acknowledging his authority, seeking his approbation. Regarding ourselves as his property, we must seek to dispose of that property according to his will. Knowing that we are not our own, and therefore not to be regulated by our own will; not other men's, and therefore not to be regulated by their will, but God's; originally his, and anew made his, by being "bought with a price," we are to "glorify him," by working that which is well-pleasing in his sight, "in our bodies and in our spirits, which are his." "Whether we live, we are to live to the Lord; whether we die, we are to die to the Lord; whether living or dying, we are to act as His." "Alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, we are to live to him; yielding ourselves to him as his servants, and our members to him as the instruments of holiness." "For this is the will of God, even our sanctification;" our entire separation in temper, and spirit, and conduct, from "the world lying under the wicked one;" "the Gentiles who know not God."[1]

This view of christian duty in its two parts, of not living to the lusts of men, and living to the will of God, is quite coincident with many other representations contained in the New Testament; as when Christians are commanded to "put off the old man, and to put on the new man;" to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God;" to "escape from the corruption that is in the world through lust," and to put on "a Divine nature;" to "be not conformed to this world, but so transformed by the renewing of the mind, as to prove what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God;" "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world."[2]

It deserves to be noticed in conclusion here, that the phraseology, "to live the rest of your time in the flesh to the will of God," naturally intimates, that the course enjoined is to be a persevering one. There is to be no returning to living to the lusts of men, but a continuing during the whole of the rest of life to live to the will of God; a constant "continuance in well-doing." Christians "have need of patience,"[3] that is, of perseverance. They must persevere, that having done the will of God they may obtain the promise. He that turns back, turns back to perdition.[4]

Let us, my brethren, endeavor to reduce to practice the lesson which has now been given us, of living not to the lusts of men, but

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 20. Rom. xiv. 8; vi. 11, 13. 1 Thess. iv. 3.
[2] Eph. iv. 22, 24. 2 Cor. vii. 1. 2 Pet. i. 4. Rom. xii. 2. Tit. ii. 12.
[3] Ὑπομονή.—Luke viii. 15. Rom. ii. 7; viii. 25. Heb. xii. 1. "Perseverance" is the ordinary meaning of this word in the New Testament.
[4] Heb. x. 36–39.

to the will of God. To act otherwise is folly and sin in all; but it is doubly sin and folly in those who profess the faith of Christ. Do you not, brethren, profess to have been delivered from the present evil world by Christ's having given himself for you by the will of God? Have you not said that the world is crucified to you by that cross of Christ in which you glory? Have you not said that ye are Christ's? And is it not written, that "they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts?"[1] And while you have denied that you are the world's, ye have declared that ye are the Lord's; and while you have renounced it, ye have avouched Him. You have said, "His we are, and Him we will serve." See, then, that you do not live to the lusts of men who know not God—"worldly lusts." See that you do not make the gratification of your own natural inclinations, in any of their endlessly-diversified forms, the object of life. Be not regulated by the love of worldly pleasure, of worldly honor, of worldly power, of worldly wealth. In one word, see that you "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."[2] See that you do not make present, sensible, apparent good, the great subject of your thoughts, the great object of your affections.

On the other hand, see that you live to the will of Him whom ye have called Master and Lord; and that you may do so, "be ye not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."[3] Grow in the knowledge of his will; and that you may do so, do his will so far as you know it. "If any man *will* do," that is, is disposed to do his will, he shall "know of the doctrine whether it be of God."[4] "The meek," the docile, the obedient, "he will lead in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." Seek, then, to stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God." Seek to be like Him whose name you bear; who said, "I delight to do thy will; thy law is in my heart." "My meat is to do the will of my Father who is in heaven, and to finish his work." Rest not in profession. Remember the words of our Lords Jesus: "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."[5]

Guard against the soul-destroying delusion, that it is possible to live both to the lusts of men, and to the will of God, at the same time. The attempt has often been made; but the thing is impossible. Before it succeed, truth and falsehood, light and darkness, good and evil, must become one. "No man can serve two masters; for either he must love the one and hate the other, or he must cleave to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world; for if ye do, the love of the Father is not in you. The friendship of the world is enmity with God."

The wisdom of taking the course recommended, is demonstrable already to all whose senses are, in any measure, "exercised to discern between good and evil." Yet a little while, and it will be made palpable to all mankind. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but

[1] Gal. v. 24. [2] 1 John ii. 15. [3] Eph. v. 17.
[4] John vii. 17. [5] Psal. xl. 8. John iv. 34. Matt. vii. 21.

is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." [1]

Our prayer for you, brethren, is that "the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make you perfect in every good work, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight." And let this be the prayer of each of you for himself: "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring me out of trouble: And of thy mercy cut off my enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant." Yes, say, "Truly, O Lord, I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds," and "I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts." "Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I *will* keep the commandments of my God." [2]

§ 2.—*The means for obtaining the practical object; the arming themselves with the thought, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."*

Having thus shown at once the course which Christians ought to avoid, and the course which they ought to follow, I now proceed to consider the second part of the second great division of the text—the view which the apostle gives us of the means which Christians must employ to enable them to avoid the first of these courses, which is natural to all men, and to which the Christian is strongly solicited and urged both from within and without; and to follow the second, which nothing but the new mind, rising out of the belief of christian truth under Divine influence, will induce any man to follow, and to depart from which the Christian is exposed to many and powerful temptations, both internal and external. "Arm yourselves with this thought, that he who has suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin." Arm yourselves with this thought, "in order to your no longer living the rest of your time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

The language here is figurative, but by no means obscure. It very clearly and impressively indicates that the course recommended is a course full of difficulty and obstructions. It is a struggle, a conflict. There are powerful influences, both from within and from without, constantly put forth to induce the Christian to "live his time in the flesh to the lusts of men," and to prevent him from living his time in the flesh to the will of God. This is the great object which his spiritual enemies are constantly endeavoring to gain. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit;" the world, by its allurements and terrors, endeavors to make the Christian "walk according to its course," to "be conformed to it," by "living to its deceitful lusts," and to prevent him from being "transformed by the renewing of his mind, so as

[1] Matt. v. 24. 1 John ii. 15–17. "Perdit quod vivit, qui te Deum non diligit; qui curat vivere, non propter te, Domine, nihil est et pro nihilo est; qui tibi vivere recusat mortuus est; qui tibi non sapit, desipit."—AUGUSTINUS.

[2] Heb. xiii. 20, 21. Psal. cxliii. 10–12; cxvi. 16; cxix. 45, 115.

to prove the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God;" and this, too, is the great end of all the machinations and assaults, "the wiles" and "the fiery darts" of that powerful, and crafty, and malignant adversary, the Devil, who is ever seeking to bring back the rescued captives to his debasing slavery, or to retard them in, disabling them for, the service of their new Master—the object equally of his terror and his hatred. The Christian must fight his way, and has need of "the armor of righteousness" before and behind, "on the right hand and the left."[1]

The combat is a spiritual one, and the armor must correspond with it. Truth lodged in the mind, by being understood and believed, and meditated on, is the grand means of warfare, both defensive and offensive, with error and sin, and with those malignant spiritual agencies which are constantly endeavoring to lead us into error and sin. It is by arming ourselves with true thoughts, that the Christian is prepared with determined resolution to stand and to withstand. His "good fight" is the "fight of faith;" his sword the word of God; his shield the confidence, and his helmet the hope, which that word believed excites in the soul. "The word of truth" is "the armor of righteousness."

Every part of the doctrine of Christ may be turned to account in the spiritual warfare. In resisting attempts to bring him again into bondage, and in fighting his way forward to perfect holiness and eternal life, there are many *thoughts* which the Christian will find available for armor, both for attack and defence. There is, indeed, no scriptural truth which may not be turned to account in this way; and our blessed Lord has, in his conflict with the great adversary, as recorded in the gospel, set us an example in this respect, that we may follow his steps. The Captain of Salvation has there shown his soldiers what their weapons are, and how to use them.[2]

But there is ONE thought which the apostle recommends to the Christians to whom he was writing, as pre-eminently useful as armor in this spiritual conflict. "Arm yourselves with this same thought, He that hath suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin." Let this thought sink deep into your hearts by being well understood and firmly believed; let it be habitually present to your minds by being often meditated on, and you will find it a most powerful means of enabling you, in opposition to all temptations of whatever kind, during the rest of your time in the flesh, to live, not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. This truth understood, believed, and reflected on, will be found the grand instrumental means, so far as you are concerned, of christian sanctification.

(1.) *The thought explained.*

To illustrate this part of our subject, it is necessary that we should satisfactorily reply to two questions: What is this thought? And how is it fitted to serve its purpose?

There is the greater need for attending to the first of these questions, as the language is so general as that, taken by itself, it is some-

[1] Gal. v. 17. Rom. xii. 2. Eph. vi. 11, 16. 2 Cor. vi. 7. [2] Matt. iv. 3–10.

what equivocal and even enigmatical. "He that has suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin."[1] What is the precise meaning folded up in these words, to which so powerful an energy is ascribed?

The words have been considered by some interpreters as a statement of the salutary influence of bodily affliction, or external calamity generally, in promoting moral improvement. In their most general sense, that he who sustains bodily or external calamities is made to cease or rest from sin, it is plainly not true without very great limitations. In many cases affliction, instead of producing cessation from sin, exasperates the depraved principles. The case of Ahaz is no singular one, who, "in the time of his distress, trespassed yet more against the Lord." When the wrath of God came upon the Israelites, "for all this they sinned still the more." The cessation from sin produced merely by affliction, is but partial and temporary. On another occasion, besides that just referred to, "when God slew the Israelites," it is said, "then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God;" but it is added, "yet their heart was not right with him;" and it is of these very persons that it is said, "How often did they provoke him in the wilderness, and tempt him in the desert!" Unaccompanied by Divine teaching, both by the word and the Spirit, mere affliction will make no man cease from sin. "Blessed is the man whom thou chasteneth, and teachest him out of thy law;" this is, the afflicted man, the only afflicted man to whom God gives "rest from the days of adversity."[2] Even limited to the sufferings of the regenerate, the statement is at once exaggerated and inapposite. Afflictions are indeed most useful to true Christians. They "try, and purify" them, and "make them white." Their design is, and to a certain extent it is gained, to "make them partakers of the Divine holiness;"[3] but surely it cannot be said of every, it cannot be said of any, afflicted Christian in the present state, that he has "ceased from sin:" and though the thought that affliction is designed, and under Divine influence is calculated to mortify sin, is well fitted to reconcile a Christian to suffering, it is difficult to see how it is pre-eminently fitted to enable him to "live the rest of his time not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

The suffering here referred to is not suffering in the flesh generally, it is the kind of suffering that the apostle is speaking of in the text and context: "suffering in the flesh for sin," even unto death. It was thus that Christ suffered in the flesh; he "suffered for sins," and he so suffered as to be put to death, or "become dead in the flesh." I have no doubt the expression, "He that hath suffered in the flesh," refers to our Lord; but I have as little, that it does not refer to our Lord alone. It is said that He suffered in the flesh "for us," that is, for believers, not only for our benefit, but in our room. He suffered the just in the room of the unjust. When he suffered "for sin," we suffered in him; his flesh was as it were our flesh; and his sufferings

[1] Bengel explains πέπαυται as equivalent to "immunitatem nactus est;" and Winer says, that though usually translated "peccare desiit," it may also be taken passively, "he has rest from sin."—Gram. P. iii. § 40, p. 207.

[2] Psal. lxxviii. 32, 34, 37, 40; xciv. 12, 13. [3] Heb. xii. 10.

in that flesh were as it were our sufferings. If he died in our room, then, according to the apostle's reasoning, we died too, we died in in him.[1] "He that has suffered in the flesh," is descriptive of every man who by the faith of the gospel is united to Christ as having died, every man who is "in him."

I apprehend that the apostle intentionally used a considerably indefinite expression, for the purpose of including both Christ, and those who are Christ's, very much in the same way as his beloved brother Paul, when, in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, verse seventh, illustrating the same subject, the necessary connection between the atonement and the sanctification of those who are personally interested in the atonement, he says, "He that is dead," that is, has died, died for sin, "is free from sin." "This thing," to allude to the words of the Apostle John, "is true, in Him and in us." The declaration, He that has suffered in the flesh has, in consequence of his sufferings, been made to rest from sin, is one, applicable, and, if we do not much mistake, intended to be applied by the apostle, both to Christ and to Christians. It is true of them both, though with some points of diversity of meaning; and the thought, whether in reference to him or to themselves, is one which is well fitted to promote personal holiness, in leading Christians to avoid all sins, and attend to all duties; not living to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

This is "the same thought" which the apostle had unfolded largely in the close of the third chapter, and briefly referred to in the first verse of this chapter. Christ suffered to death in human nature, as the expiatory victim of our sins, in our room, and we suffered and died in him; we Christians, we believers, being, in consequence of our faith, viewed as identified with him; as having done what he did, as having suffered what he suffered.

Now let us look at the thought, first in reference to Christ, and then in reference to Christians, and let us see how, in both views of it, it is well fitted to "arm" the Christian so that he may no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

(2.) *The thought viewed as referring to Christ.*

Let us look at the thought in reference to Christ. "He that hath suffered in the flesh," that is, for sins, "has been made to rest from sin." Christ suffered in the flesh for sin; he has been made to rest from sin; and his being made to rest from sin, is the consequence of his having suffered in the flesh for sin.

We have had an opportunity, in a foregoing discourse, of directing your attention to our Lord's sufferings in human nature. They began with his birth, and ended only at his death. All these sufferings were sufferings for sin. "God made to meet on him the iniquities of us all;" exaction was made for these iniquities, and He the appointed victim answered the exaction. He had no rest after being "made of a woman, made under the law," till, in his obediential

[1] 2 Cor. v. 14.

sufferings to the death, he had made full expiation of the sins laid on him.[1]

But having done so, he has obtained rest from sin. On the cross he exclaimed, "It is finished;" and so it was. Sin, armed by the sanction of the law, gave him no rest till it laid him in a bloody, dishonored grave; but in doing this it utterly and forever lost all power to disquiet him. It could not even retain him in the grave where it had laid him. The debt being fully paid, the surety was set at liberty. He is henceforward a stranger to suffering in all its forms. He *can* no longer suffer, he *can* no longer die. He has entered into his rest; and that "rest is glorious." He is "sitting," the posture of repose, "at the right hand of the Majesty on high; angels, and principalities, and powers, being subject to him." Instead of the incessant toils of his humbled life on earth as the victim of sin, there is the uninterrupted repose of eternity; to the powerlessness of death to which sin reduced him, has succeeded "all power over all flesh, all power in heaven and earth;" in the room of the days of a mortal man, few and full of trouble, has come "length of days forever and ever;" he who was the man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, has become "most blessed forever;" and the soul which was exceeding sorrowful even to death, is "made exceeding glad with Jehovah's countenance."[2]

This rest from sin not only followed the sufferings for sin, but was, properly speaking, their effect. It was by his suffering for sin that he obtained rest from sin. "Having died for sin he was freed from sin." The reason why death can have no more dominion over him is, that he died for sin *once*, and by that one death completely answered all the demands of law and justice on him as the surety of sinners. The law has nothing further to exact from him; and the immortal state of life, and rest, and power, and dominion, and glory, and blessedness, is to be considered not only as the natural expression of the infinite complacency of Jehovah, well pleased for his righteousness' sake, delighted with that love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity manifested in the voluntary, vicarious, penal sufferings of his incarnate Son, for the vindication of his holy, just, and good law, and the restoration to immortal holy happiness of an innumerable multitude of otherwise hopelessly depraved and miserable human beings; it is to be viewed also as the execution of the stipulations of the eternal covenant, that when he had made his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand; he should see of the travail of his soul, so as to be satisfied; he should, through the knowledge of himself, justify many; he should have the great as his portion, the strong for his spoil; because he had poured out his soul unto death, having been numbered with the transgressors, and having borne the sin of many. He who suffered to death in the flesh for sin has been raised from the dead, and exalted to an immortal state of absolute security from suffering, and of the highest enjoyment, and a station of the highest honor and authority; and this resurrection and this exaltation are the

[1] Isa. liii. 6, 7. Gal. iii. 4. [2] 1 Pet. iii. 2. John xvii. 2. Matt. xxviii. 18.
[3] Isa. liii. 10–12.

results, the effects, of his penal, expiatory sufferings. Such seems to me the import of the thought, "He that hath suffered hath been made to rest from sin," viewed in reference to our Lord.[1]

(3.) *The thought viewed as referring to Christians.*

Let us now look at the thought in reference to Christians. When Christ suffered in the flesh for sins, it was for them, in their room. They of course suffered in him, and it is true, in a very important sense, that they, having thus suffered for sin in him, are made to rest from sin.

Christians are very frequently, especially by the Apostle Paul, represented as identified with Christ. In consequence of the faith of the truth respecting his person and work, they are brought into so intimate a relation to him that they are said to be "in him," one with him. This does not refer to that union of mind and heart, of sentiment, affection, will, and operation, which subsists between Christians and Christ, and which is produced by the Spirit through the instrumentality of the word; that is rather Christ's being in them, than their being in Christ; it is the being so connected with Christ as that they are treated by God as if what he did and suffered had been done and suffered by them personally. All who are united to Christ, by that faith of which profession is made in baptism, are, by the apostle, represented as united to him in his death, that is, as having died in him; in his burial, that is, as having been buried in him; in his resurrection, that is, a shaving risen again in him; in his life and glory, that is, as living and reigning in him with God in heaven. "Ye are," says he to the Colossians, "dead," or have died, that is, in Christ; and as, if you live, though you have died, "your life is hid with Christ in God." And of himself he says, what is not peculiar to him as an apostle, but common to him with all Christians, "I am crucified with Christ." When he died, he died *for* them. It was their sins, not his own, that he bore to the tree.[2]

When we say then of Christians, that they have suffered in the flesh for sin, we mean that by a Divine constitution they have as deep an interest in Christ's sufferings in the flesh for sin, as if they themselves had undergone them. They are so interested in them as to be made to rest from sin in consequence of them. They are delivered from the condemning power of sin, and they are delivered from the reigning power of sin; and they are delivered from both, not in consequence of their having suffered for sin in the flesh, in their own persons, but in consequence of their having become by faith individually interested in those sufferings for sin in the flesh which were inflicted on the person of their divinely-appointed substitute.

Every human being is a sinner, and every sinner is condemned on account of his sin. The curse of God lies on him, and must forever rest on him, till he become personally connected with Him who suffered the just in the room of the unjust. Till then, the sinner can obtain no rest, no security from sin and its penal consequences. Armed with the power of the law, sin keeps fast hold of him, ready at

[1] See note B. [2] Rom. vi. 3-5. Col. iii. 3. Gal. ii. 20.

any moment to produce death, casting the body into the grave, plunging the soul into the abyss of perdition.

From this tremendous state all who are in Christ have obtained deliverance. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus;" and the reason is very obvious. They are in him who was condemned in their stead, and suffered that to which they were condemned; they are redeemed from the curse, for the righteous One, their divinely-appointed substitute, has become a curse for them. Who can lay anything to their charge? Christ died, died for *them*. "In him they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of God's grace." "In him, the beloved One, they are accepted, being reconciled in the body of his flesh by death." "His blood cleanseth them from all sin." So that they are "dead to the law," to its condemning sentence, "through the body of Christ;" they are "in him made the righteousness of God," in consequence of "Him who knew no sin, being by God made sin in their room;" "sinners, ungodly" in themselves, they are "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," who is "set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood;" having been "given for their offences, and raised again for their justification."[1] The unbeliever, unconnected with Christ, and therefore unpardoned, is never safe. Guilt, like the avenger of blood, is constantly pursuing him, and at any moment may overtake him and take his life. There is no rest, no peace, no security, to the sinner who is not "in him" who has suffered and been made to rest. But he who by faith is "in Christ," has entered the city of refuge and is safe within its walls; and, as our high priest never dies, to secure his safety he must remain within its walls forever.

But he who by faith is interested in Christ's suffering in the flesh for sin, as if it had been his own suffering, being indeed suffering in his room, is made to rest from sin, not only in its condemning, but in its reigning power. "Sin shall not have dominion over him" who is in Christ Jesus; for, in consequence of Christ's suffering in the flesh for sin, and his personal interest in his suffering, he is "not under the law but under grace." He is united to Christ not only as one who was the victim of sin, as one who bore his sins, but to him as one who has borne away his sins; to Christ not only as one who was under the curse, but to Christ as now, for the manner in which he sustained that load, the object of the highest complacency of his Father. He is regarded by God with a complacency like that with which the Saviour is regarded; and that is manifested in the communication of "the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus," and "delivers him from the law of sin and of death." And this spirit comes not, as a wayfaring man, to tarry for a night, but to take up his permanent residence in a temple appropriated to him, and which he will in due time make every way suitable for his everlasting dwelling-place.[2]

There is thus absolute security obtained by every person who is by faith united to Christ, and thus personally interested in his suffering in the flesh, of being made completely to rest from sin, of being brought

[1] Rom. viii. 1–34. 1 John i. 7. 2 Cor. v. 21. Rom. iii. 24; iv. 25.
[2] Rom. vi. 14; viii. 2.

into a state where there shall be no law in the members to war against the law of the mind; where there shall be no striving of the flesh against the Spirit; where the Spirit shall rule unopposed, and the law of the mind shall have free course and be glorified; where the Christian will no more sigh out, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?" but shall forever sing, "I thank God," who hath delivered me, completely delivered me, "through Christ Jesus." "Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory."[1] Then will the Christian be made completely to "rest from sin."

That this second kind of rest from sin is as really as the first the fruit of the atonement, the consequence of Christ suffering for sin in the flesh, and our being united to him as our surety and representative, is very clearly stated by the Apostle Paul in these important, but we are afraid very generally misapprehended, or at any rate very imperfectly understood, words, "Our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;"[2] that is, 'In the atoning death of the Son of God, is laid a foundation of absolute security for the complete sanctification of all who are interested in its saving power, by the faith of the gospel.'

(4.) *The thought viewed as a piece of Christian armor—the instrumental means of sanctification.*

Having thus attempted to explain both in reference to Christ and to Christians, the thought, "He that hath suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin," it only remains that we endeavor to show how this thought is fitted to serve the purpose of spiritual armor; or, in other words, how the truth as to the Saviour's accepted atonement, and the interest which believers have in it, is fitted in opposition to all opposing influences, to be a prevailing motive, to the cultivation of practical holiness, to the "not living the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." The subject is a wide and important one. It is not a particularly difficult one; but from its very nature it requires close attention of mind in order to be distinctly understood.

The thought with which the apostle calls Christians to arm themselves, shows that that holiness in all conversation, that living not according to the lusts of men, but to the will of God, to which he exhorts them, is not an impossible thing. Man is a depraved being; viewed in his relations to God, an entirely depraved being. "In him, that is, in his flesh," in him as he is by nature, "there dwells no spiritual good thing."[3] What God requires of him is in the highest degree reasonable, and needs no physical faculty, either intellectual or active, to its performance, which man does not possess. But he labors under a disinclination to yield that kind and measure of obedience which God requires, most criminal, indeed, but still by all but Divine influence invincible. And as man is already criminal, has already incurred the Divine displeasure, it obviously seems impossible, if some means are not employed to alter man's relations to the Divine government, that God, in consistency either with his wisdom, his holiness, his justice,

[1] Rom. vii. 24, 25. [2] Rom. vi. 6. [3] Rom. vii. 18.

his faithfulness, ay, or his goodness, taking a wide view of the subject, can put forth that influence on the sinner's mind that is necessary to incline him to true holiness; that is, in other words, can confer on the proper object of his judicial displeasure what is the most decided manifestation that a person is an object of his peculiar favor.

The united wisdom and power of men and angels could never have devised and executed a plan for removing this difficulty. But the thought, 'Christ has suffered in the flesh for sins, in the room of sinners, and has been made to rest from sin,' that thought, if understood, will be found to contain in it distinct intimation, that the apparently insurmountable obstacles in the way of man's compliance with the will of God, have been removed. Christ, the only begotten of God, standing in the room of men, has done what they were bound to do, suffered what they deserved to suffer, has done more to magnify and make honorable the Divine law, than either their unsinning obedience, or their everlasting destruction in consequence of their having sinned, could have done. It thus becomes a just thing in God to justify the ungodly, to pardon sinners, to accept them, and treat them as righteous, and to give them his Holy Spirit to quicken their dead, to sanctify their unholy, hearts. Christ's becoming a curse in the room of men, thus lays a foundation equally for "the blessing of Abraham," a free and full justification being conferred on men; and their receiving "the promise of the Spirit through faith," that is, the promised Spirit through believing. An infinite atonement having been offered and accepted, God can, in consistency with the perfections of his character and the principles of his government, pardon the guilty, justify the unrighteous, sanctify the unholy. The divinely-appointed Saviour has merit enough to obtain pardon for the guiltiest; and, on the ground of this merit, he is in possession of power and authority enough to send that into the heart of the sinner, which will overpower all his natural indisposition to the will of God, and lead him, in opposition to all counteracting influences, to "prove that good, and perfect, and acceptable will."

But this is not all. The thought with which the apostle exhorts Christians to arm themselves, conveys to the mind that understands it, the assurance not only that the conformity to the Divine will enjoined is something that may be attained, but that it is something that shall most certainly be attained by all believers. It intimates that every believer is actually so interested in the atonement that has been made in his room, by Christ suffering in the flesh for sin, as to have been made to rest from sin. Having suffered in Christ, he has entered with him into his rest. His sins are forgiven. He has received the Holy Spirit, the author of true holiness; and though the powers of evil with which he has to struggle, both within and without, are strong as well as numerous, yet "greater is He" in whom he is, and He "who is in him, than he who is in the world." He is "washed, he is sanctified, he is justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The condemning power of sin, the want of quickening, sanctifying influences in the heart, keep unbelieving sinners, as it were, hopelessly bound in the fetters of depravity; but to the believer in Christ "there is no condemnation,"

and he also has "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;" so that in him, "God, by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin," that is, as a sin-offering, has "condemned sin in the flesh," has deprived sin of its reigning power over his nature; and thus "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him, not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit,"[1] that is, "not living to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

From the nature of the case, the security referred to is not a security without reference to the believer's own exertions as an intelligent and moral agent; it is a security that he shall, by Divine influence, be led to use the appropriate means of sanctification, and a security that these means shall not be used by him in vain.

I have only farther to remark here, that the thought with which the apostle calls Christians to arm themselves, if understood, brings before the mind the most powerful motives to that disconformity to the lusts of men, and conformity to the will of God, to which he exhorts; motives appealing to all our strongest, active principles, to gratitude and love, to hope and fear. This remark admits of very extended illustration. I must confine myself to one or two examples.

How powerfully does "this thought" dissuade from sin in all its forms! In how clear a light does it place the excellence and obligation of the Divine law; and the malignant nature, the destructive tendency, and the dreadful effects of moral evil! "The believer," as Archbishop Leighton says, "looking on his Jesus crucified for him, wounded for his transgressions, and taking in deep thoughts of his spotless innocency that deserved no such thing, and of his matchless love that yet endured it all for him, then will he think, Shall I be a friend to that which was his deadly enemy; shall sin be sweet to me that was so bitter to him, and that for my sake? Shall I ever have a favorable thought of, or lend a good look to, them which shed my Lord's blood? Shall I live in that for which he died, and died to kill it in me?"

How obviously and powerfully is "this thought" calculated to excite and strengthen the love of God, which is the source of all true living to his will! How strikingly are the venerable and amiable excellencies of the Divine character exhibited in the atonement of Christ, and its blessed effects both to Him and to those who are united to Him! How great the display of Divine love in Christ's suffering for sins in our room, and in the rest from sin that is thus secured for us?

How great is the encouragement, "this thought" gives to the performance of duty! To borrow again the words of the good Archbishop: "Our burden that pressed us to hell is taken off; our chains that bound us over to eternal death are knocked off. Shall we not walk, shall we not run, in his ways? How heavy, how unsufferable, the burden and yoke of which he has eased us! His yoke is easy, his burden is light! O the happy change! rescued from the vilest slavery, and called to conformity and fellowship with the Son of God."

The thought that brings all this before the mind must be well fitted

[1] Rom. viii. 3, 4.

to arm it against temptation; and powerful in constraining us to live not to ourselves, not to other men, but to God, who hath bought us at so dear a price, that we may glorify him in our souls and in our bodies, which are his.

"This thought" being in our mind, habitually in our mind, is essential to our sanctification. We cannot be sanctified if it be not in our mind; and, if it really be habitually in our mind, sanctification is a matter of course.

The Apostle Paul, in the first part of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,[1] has cast a flood of light on the subject which we have been considering. I shall give you a summary of his illustration. 'All true Christians are united to Christ, identified, as it were, with him; united to him both in his death and his resurrection; united to him as having died, and as having risen again to an unending life. His death was a death by sin, for sin—a death penal, vicarious, expiatory. We are united to him in that death. It is as if we ourselves had by death made expiation for our sins. His life is a life conferred on him by God, as a token that he is fully satisfied with the expiation of sin made by his death. We are united to him in that life; God regards us as he regards him. He who is dead, or who has died, that is, by sin; he who in death has expiated sin, is free from, is justified from, sin. Sin can no longer condemn him. Death, the penalty of sin, can no longer reign over him. It cannot be exacted, for it has been already paid. This is the case with Christ; this is the case with us in Christ.

'Let this thought, then, dwell in your minds. He died once by sin, as the victim of sin. He lives forever, raised by God as the token of his satisfaction with the sacrifice; and we are united to him both in this death and in this life. We have in him died, been put to death by sin; and we in him have been quickened, and made to sit with him in the heavenly places, made partakers of the favor with which God regards him. And taking these views of your state and relation to God, in consequence of your being by faith united to him as your representative, both in dying and in rising again, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God; for sin shall not have dominion over you." It reigned unto death over you in the person of your Surety; but it has done its worst to him and to you. He lives, and so do you, with a life of which you can never be deprived, a holy, happy life, never to be debased by the slavery of sin, but entirely devoted to the service of God.'

Such, if we mistake not, is the substance of the Apostle Paul's statement; and what is it but a somewhat more expanded expression of the sentiment in the passage before us? "Forasmuch as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, Arm yourselves with this same thought, that he who has suffered in the flesh has been made to rest from sin,

[1] Rom. vi. 1–14.

that ye may no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

These illustrations have failed of their object, if they have not led us into a just appreciation of Christianity as the most effectual means of morally improving, the only means of spiritually transforming, depraved man, and disclosed to us the secret in which its great strength lies to make men truly holy. The superior efficacy of Christianity, as an instrument of ameliorating the moral condition of mankind, to every other means employed for this purpose, will not be questioned by any enlightened and unprejudiced thinker; but the true cause of this efficacy, and the manner in which it is put forth, are overlooked by most, misapprehended by many, and rightly understood by comparatively few.

The efficacy of Christianity, as a transformer of human character, is attributed by many even of its teachers to the purity, extent, and spirituality of its moral requisitions; and to the plainness with which these are stated, and the energy with which they are enforced, in the law, and by the example of Christ. It is impossible to speak too highly of the christian morality, unless you exalt it, as has often been done, to the disparagement of the atoning sacrifice and quickening spirit of its author; and we willingly admit, that in the formation of a christianly good character, the *law* of Christ occupies an important, though still a subordinate place.

But he ill understands the principles of human nature, who expects that a being, such as both revelation and experience tell us that man is, wholly depraved, alienated from the life of God, strongly inclined to forbidden indulgence, alike strongly disinclined to the restraints of religious and moral obligation, should merely by a statement and enforcement of duty, however clear and cogent, be made to undergo a radical change in his principles and habits. Who, indeed, does not know, that the attempt to urge on a person a mode of conduct to which he is strongly disinclined, if you do not at the same time employ appropriate and adequate means for altering the inclination, usually ends in increasing the indisposition it was intended to remove, aggravating the disease it was meant to cure? The morality of Christianity far exceeds any other morality which the world has ever seen. Where is to be found anything to be compared with the Sermon on the Mount, or the moral part of the apostolical epistles? Yet the transforming power of the system does not lie here. The morality of Christianity may be useful in convincing a bad man that he is bad, and in helping a good man to become better; but, constituted as human nature is, it cannot convert a bad man into a good man.

Another class of christian teachers, in much greater harmony with the principles both of the scriptural revelation and a sound mental philosophy, have held that the power of Christianity to make men new creatures, resides in its peculiarities as a doctrinal system; that the clear, well-established disclosures it makes of the grandeur and the grace of the Divine character, of the infinite venerableness, and estimableness, and loveliness, and kindness, of the Supreme Being; in the accounts it gives us of the incarnation and sacrifice of his only-begotten Son, and of the inestimably valuable blessings which, through

his mediation, are bestowed on mankind; when apprehended in their meaning and evidence, that is, when understood and believed, naturally and necessarily produce such a revolution in man's mode of thinking and feeling in reference to God, as naturally and necessarily leads to a revolution in his mode of conduct; and that then, and not till then, the moral or preceptive part of Christianity begins to tell on the amelioration of the character.

These sentiments, especially when connected, as they usually are, with a persuasion of the necessity of supernatural influence, the influence of the Holy Spirit, to bring the mind and to keep the mind under the moral influence of evangelical truth, appear to us just, so far as they go; but still they exhibit but an imperfect view of the manner in which Christianity produces—what nothing else can—a radical, permanent, ever-progressive improvement of the human character, leading a man to "live the rest of his time in the flesh not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

Fully to understand this most important subject, it is necessary to recollect that Christianity, in the most extensive sense of the word, is something more than a revelation either of moral or religious truth. It is the development of a Divine economy, a system of Divine dispensations in reference to a lost world; and it is in these dispensations, the incarnation and sacrifice of the Only-Begotten of God, dispensations having for their direct object the change of man, the sinner's relation to the Supreme Being as the moral governor of the world, that the true origin of man's moral transformation is to be found; and it is as a development of these dispensations that the christian revelation principally conduces to the sanctification of man.

Nothing is more obvious than that a man's state, relations, and circumstances have a powerful influence on the formation of his character. The same individual, if placed in infancy in the state of slavery, or in the state of royalty, would in mature life be distinguished by very different, and in many points directly opposite, dispositions and habits. A certain set of relations and circumstances may be quite incongruous with a certain character; and every species of moral means may be employed in vain to produce that character, till these relations and circumstances are changed. Let a slave receive every advantage of the most accomplished education, if he is not enfranchised there is little probability of his being formed to the generous character of a freeman. Let me know a man to be my enemy, or even suspect him to be so, and no exhibition of his good qualities, though I should be brought to credit them, which I will be very slow to do, can induce me to put confidence in him. Let the relation of hostility be changed into one of friendship, and let me be persuaded of this, and the same moral means which were formerly utterly inefficacious, will produce a powerful effect. These plain, common sense principles, transferred to the subject before us, lead us into the truth respecting the origin of the transforming, sanctifying influence of Christianity.

The relations of man, as a righteously-condemned sinner, are incompatible with a holy character. While man is condemned, and knows that he is condemned, how can he be holy, how can he become holy?

How can God consistently bestow the highest token of his complacent regard, the Sanctifying Spirit, on one who is the proper object of his moral disapprobation and judicial displeasure; and how can man love, or trust, or affectionately obey him, whom he knows that he has offended, whom he has reason to consider as his omnipotent enemy? It is by meeting and removing these difficulties that Christianity secures the holiness of man. It is in securing, by a set of Divine arrangements, the change of a state of hostility into a state of friendship; in rendering the pardon and salvation of the guilty consistent with, ay, illustrative of, the perfections of the Divine character and the principles of the Divine government, that Christianity lays deep, and broad, and sure, the foundation of man's deliverance, not only from misery but from sin; not only of his endless happiness but of his moral perfection. In the vicarious sacrifice of the incarnate Son, in his suffering for us in the flesh for sin, the just in the room of the unjust, so suffering as that he found rest from sin, provision is made for a most happy change in our relations. We, united to him, suffering for sin in our room, are made to rest from sin. And in this change of relations is necessarily implied, and indubitably secured, a complete change of moral disposition and habits. It is this which leads to no longer living to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. It is this chief of the works of God, that, like the main-spring or moving power of a complicated piece of machinery, gives resistless energy and unfailing efficacy, in the case of the saved, to the moral influence of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. The better the connection between the atonement and sanctification is understood; the more firmly it is believed; the more habitually it is meditated on—the greater progress will the individual Christian make in practical godliness; and he who would comply with the apostle's exhortation, to "live no longer the rest of his time to the lusts of men, but to the will of God," must arm himself with this thought, "He that hath suffered in the flesh is made to rest from sin." [1]

The sanctifying efficacy of the atonement is exerted through the faith of the atonement. It is only as known and believed that it can either pacify the conscience or purify the heart. Let all, then, who would make progress in holiness, firmly believe, frequently meditate on, habitually keep in memory, the great topic which we have been attempting to illustrate: the grace of God manifested in his Son suffering in the flesh for sin in our room. That grace revealed in the gospel, if understood and believed, and meditated on, will do what nothing else can; it will effectually "teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this world; looking for the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from the present evil world, redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." If ministers wish to make men holy, let them preach the cross; if Christians wish to grow in holiness, let them look to the cross, and to him who hung on it. It is ours to present

[1] These thoughts on the nature of the sanctifying power of Christianity, are more fully illustrated in the Preliminary Essays to Collins' edition of Maclaurin's Works.

to you "this armor;" it is yours, as good soldiers of Christ Jesus, to put it on and prove it. Arm yourselves with this thought, and you shall assuredly put to flight all the armies of the aliens, and be in due time made "more than conquerors through him who loved you."

III.—MOTIVES ENFORCING THE EXHORTATION,

The motives to comply with the apostle's exhortation come now to be considered. The duty to which the apostle exhorts Christians is twofold: the no longer living the rest of the time in the flesh to the lusts of men; the living the rest of the time in the flesh to the will of God. And he enforces this twofold duty by two motives; the first bearing chiefly on the negative part of the injunction, drawn from a consideration of the nature of that course which, under the influence of the faith of the gospel, they had abandoned, and which he calls on them henceforward carefully to avoid; the second bearing equally on the negative and the positive part of the injunction, deduced from a consideration of the great design of the gospel revelation. The first of these motives is stated in the third, fourth, and fifth verses. The second in the sixth. Let us attend to them in their order.

§ 1.—*Motive drawn from the character of the course against which the exhortation is directed.*

This, then, is the first motive which the apostle uses to urge Christians not to live the rest of the time to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. "The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; who shall give account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead." The whole of this statement bears on one point,—the criminal, disgraceful, dangerous character of that course which the apostle calls on Christians studiously to avoid. The leading ideas are these: To follow that course is to work the will of the Gentiles, the unenlightened heathen, the nations that knew not God. The importance of avoiding that course is manifest from the practices in which those who walk in it indulge, the infatuation under which they labor, and the responsibility under which they lie; and additional force is given to these considerations from the circumstance, that this is a course which Christians themselves once pursued, but which they have through the faith of the truth been led to abandon. Let us endeavor a little more fully to bring out these thoughts, and show how well fitted they are to serve the apostle's purpose, of impressing on the minds of those to whom he wrote a sense of the importance of their not living the rest of the time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

(1.) The course which he guards them against is that which is characteristic of the Gentiles. It is "the will of the Gentiles." To make "the lusts of men," that is, natural inclination, the rule and reason of conduct, in forgetfulness of, in opposition to, "the will of

God," is that which formed the character of the gentile nations, and made them in a religious and moral point of view the very reverse of what every christian man must desire to be. The Gentiles are represented in the New Testament as by way of eminence "sinners," as "not knowing God," as "not following after righteousness." The strongest expression for an enormous and uncommon crime is, that it was "not so much as named among the Gentiles;" [1] a phraseology intimating that they were familiar with crime in almost every conceivable form. It must be a very strange crime they are unacquainted with, a very shocking one which their moral feelings are revolted by.

We have a few specimens given us here of the kind of conduct by which the gentiles were generally characterized. They "walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries;" and we have a complete portrait of gentile character and manners given us in the close of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where they are represented as guilty of the most shocking and unnatural crimes, "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, yet not only doing the same, but taking pleasure in those who do them." [2] And in what did this fearful depravity of character and conduct originate? just in living to the lusts of men, and not to the will of God, allowing natural inclination, unchecked by a regard to the will of God, to be the rule and the reason of action.

In the very fact that the course of conduct forbidden is that by which the Gentiles were characterized, there is couched a strong dissuasive from it. What characterized Gentiles, could not be becoming saints. In the simple phrase "working the will of the Gentiles," you have folded up the principal motive which the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, so finely amplifies, "I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work wickedness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be ye have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." [3]

(2.) The motive suggested by these enormities themselves, to guard against the depraved principle, of which all these enormities of the Gentiles were merely the development, the making natural inclination, not the will of God, the rule and reason of conduct, is greatly

[1] Gal. ii. 20. 1 Thess. iv. 5. Rom. ix. 30. 1 Cor. v. 1. [2] Rom. i. 18–32.
[3] Eph. iv. 17–24.

strengthened by the view which the apostle takes, in the 4th verse, of the infatuation which characterized those who had given themselves up to its guidance. They were "given up to a reprobate," a wrong-judging, "mind."[1] The very faculty of discovering truth from falsehood, and right from wrong, though not destroyed so as that they ceased to be accountable beings, was weakened and perverted. They called, and to a considerable degree thought, in reference to religious and moral subjects, "darkness light, and light darkness, evil good, and good evil, bitter sweet, and sweet bitter." As an evidence of this, "they thought it strange" that they who had "escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus, did not run with them to the same excess of riot,"[2] and "spoke evil of them" for those very tempers and habits which ought to have drawn forth expressions of their approbation. They accounted the abandonment of those courses,—in which they sought, in which they confidently, though vainly, hoped to obtain, happiness,—arrant folly! And they ran down as irreligious, and despisers of the gods, those who had been "turned from dead idols to serve the living God." They mistook their licentious indulgence for true happiness, and their "abominable idolatries" for true religion. "Their foolish hearts were darkened." What fearful delusion was this! How thankful should Christians be for having been awakened from such a delirious dream, and made sober-minded, sound-minded, in their judgments respecting the most important and interesting of all subjects, God's character and will, and their own duty and happiness! How carefully should they guard against being in any degree again brought under the intoxicating influence of "this present evil world," operating on unbridled natural inclination; of being in any degree "entangled or overcome" by these deceitful worldly lusts, from which, through the Spirit and word of Christ, they have almost "clean escaped!"[3]

(3.) Another consideration, suggested by the apostle as fitted to warn Christians against "living to the lusts of men," is the awful responsibility under which they lie who follow this course. "They must give account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Men may act as if they were irresponsible; but they cannot make themselves irresponsible. They cannot escape the judgment of God; and, though they make their lusts or their will the rule by which their actions are regulated, they cannot make them the rule by which their actions shall be judged. Their attempts to break the bands that bind them to God are unavailing, except to convert what might have been a silken cord, in the hand of God, to draw them up to heaven, into an iron chain to drag them to the judgment-seat, or adamantine fetters to bind them in the prison of hell. "For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it

[1] Ἀδόκιμον νοῦν. Rom. i. 29.

[2] Συντρεχόντων ὑμῶν εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ἀσωτίαν. What a striking illustration of the peculiar appropriateness of the apostle's terms συντρεχόντων and ἀσωτίαν do the following lines from a Roman poet, in reference to the orgies of Bacchus, afford!

"Turba ruunt: mixtæque viris, matresque nurusque
Vulgusque, proceresque ignota ad sacra feruntur
Quis furor—
Femineæ voces, et mota insania vino
Obscenique greges, et inania tympana— Ovid, Met. iii. 529, &c.

2 Pet. ii. 19, 20.

be good or whether it be evil." "The Lord hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness; he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness." Before that tribunal all must stand, and "God will render to every man according to his works:" to those "who live to the will of God," "who, in a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, he will render eternal life;" but to those "who live to the lusts of men, who work the will of the Gentiles," "who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."[1] Who, with the judgment-seat before him, the account which must there be given, and the fearful results if that account is, that the time in the flesh has been spent in obedience to the lusts of men and the will of the Gentiles, instead of the will of God, would not tremble at the thought of allowing natural inclination, or common custom, to take the place of Divine authority as the controlling and guiding power of life? Such is, I apprehend, the force of the statement contained in the 5th verse as a motive to Christians to avoid living to the lusts of men, working the will of the Gentiles; and it is not easy to estimate the power it ought to have on every mind.

While there can be no doubt that the account here spoken of is the last account at the final judgment, it may be doubted, whether that is the judgment which God is here represented as "ready," prepared, just about to execute, on the living and the dead.[2] Eighteen hundred years have nearly elapsed since these words were written, and that judgment has not yet taken place. The whole human race are sometimes divided into the living and the dead, meaning by those terms all who have died, and all who are to be found alive at the coming of the Lord. Thus the apostle declares that "Jesus is ordained of God to be the judge of the quick," that is, the living, and "the dead;" and Paul orders Timothy to do his official duties "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearance and kingdom."[3]

But it is difficult to perceive any reason in the passage before us for referring to this division of all mankind, as either dead or living, at the day of judgment. It seems highly probable, that the word "dead," used in the first clause of the next verse as descriptive of persons to whom the Gospel is preached, preached when dead, signifies those who are spiritually dead; as there can be no doubt that they who live, spoken of in the second clause, they who "live to God in the spirit," are those who are spiritually alive; and there cannot be a reasonable doubt that the living and the dead spoken of in the fifth verse, are the dead and living spoken of in the sixth verse. These remarks would go far to prove that, in the verse before us, the division of mankind here is not into those who shall be naturally dead

[1] Eccles. xii. 14. Psal. ix. 7, 8. Rom. ii. 6–9. Jude 14, 15.
[2] Τῷ ἑτοίμως ἔχοντι. [3] Acts x. 42. 2 Tim. iv. 1.

and those who shall be naturally alive at the coming of our Lord, but into the spiritually dead and the spiritually alive.

On both these classes God was ready, just about, to execute judgment, in the sense of inflicting severe calamities. When we look a little forward in the chapter (verse 12), we find that a fiery trial was about to try those whom the apostle calls his "beloved"—that is, "the living;" but it was not to be peculiar to them to be thus tried. Suffering was about to fall with still more crushing weight on the "ungodly," "the dead." "The time is come," is just at hand, "when judgment must begin at the house of God"—that is, just in other words, "He is ready to judge the quick," the spiritually alive; but he is ready to judge the spiritually dead too; for the apostle goes on, "if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God; and if the righteous, 'the living,' scarcely be saved," are to be all but destroyed by the awful infliction, "where shall the ungodly and the wicked," 'the dead,' "appear?" The sense of the apostle may, we apprehend, be thus given: These ungodly men, who persist in impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience, must appear before the judgment-seat of a righteous God, who even here makes it evident that he is the judge of the world, and who is about to inflict calamities which will fall heavily both on his people and his enemies, "the living and the dead."

What the judgment referred to is, it is impossible to say with certainty; some considering it as referring to calamities connected with the overthrow of the ecclesiastical and civil polity of the Jews, which was at hand, and which was the occasion of suffering not only to the Jews of Palestine, but to the Jews of the dispersion; and others considering it as referring to a severe famine, which in the time of the Emperor Claudius, visited the region in which the Christians, to whom this epistle is addressed, resided. To meet such a trial, few things were better fitted to prepare Christians than habitually living to the will of God; and nothing more calculated to make it difficult to bear, than losing the testimony of a good conscience by living to the lusts of men.

(4.) We have not yet, however, exhausted the force of the motive contained in the apostle's statement. In this evil way of living to the lusts of men, working the will of the Gentiles, they had "*once* walked." This they had done "in the time past of their life"—that is, in that part of their life which preceded their conversion. It has been a question, whether, in these words, the apostle refers to christian converts from among the Jews, or from among the Gentiles. The churches to which the epistle was addressed were composed of persons belonging to both classes; and therefore it is not wonderful that phrases should be employed, some equally applicable to both classes, some more applicable to the one than to the other. All of them had lived to the lusts of men, all of them had worked the will of the Gentiles. With all of them, natural inclination, uncontrolled by the will of God, had been the rule and reason of their conduct, the forming principle of their character; and in some of them, this had led to open and shameless violations of the Divine law, which manifested the true nature and tendency of the principles by which all were animated and guided.

The passage before us is very similar to the two following, which show us how it is to be understood. After giving a catalogue of some of the most flagrant violators of the Divine law, the apostle says to the Corinthian Christians, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "Ye were dead," says he to the Ephesian gentile converts, "in trespasses and sins; in which in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." [1]

Now, says the apostle, "the time" spent under such influences, in such practices, "may suffice." We surely have had enough, more than enough, of this. The phraseology is peculiar and very expressive—probably borrowed from the Prophet Ezekiel, when he says, in reference to the enormities of the people of Israel, "Let it suffice you of all your abominations." [2] It is a way, with the guilt and disgrace and misery of which we are but too well acquainted. We should never have walked in that way; we have walked too long in it; we have been led to abandon it. Surely we will not return to it! Awakened from our dream of delirium, surely we will not again put to our lips the narcotic cup which occasioned it! Recovered from our wanderings in the downward road of ruin, surely we will not again forsake the onward, upward path! Surely the future part of our time should be as exclusively devoted to the will of God, as the former part of it was to "the lusts of men!" We should surely serve HIM who has the highest conceivable claims on our service, as devotedly as we did those who had no claim on our service at all! "We are not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh." We have greatly overpaid it, which never had any just demand on us. Let us spend no more of our money for what is not bread, but poison; no more of our labor for that which does not profit, but ruins.

The import of the whole illustration here, seems to coincide with the striking passage with which the Apostle Paul concludes the 6th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, of which chapter the passage before us is just a compendium. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." Surely there has been enough, more than enough, of what is so full of guilt and degradation, so fruitful of remorse and shame,

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 11. Eph. ii. 1–3. [2] Ezek. xliv. 6; xlv. 9.

which implies such infatuation, and incurs such responsibilities! Surely there should be no more living to the lusts of men, working the will of the Gentiles! It is matter of deep regret that any of our past time, that so much of our past time should have been so unworthily spent. It will be tenfold folly and sin if any of our future time should be so squandered. So much for the illustration of the first motive.

§ 2.—*Motive drawn from the great design of the Gospel Revelation.*

The second motive is derived from the great design of the gospel revelation, and is brought forward in the sixth verse: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, or even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

The key to the interpretation of this passage, certainly among the most intricate in the whole book of God, seems to lie in its connection. It has been common to seek a connection between these words and those which immediately precede them. I have done so with all the closeness of attention I am capable of, but I have not been able to find it. The statement in this verse is plainly a reason for something previously stated; but I cannot find in these words anything like a reason why God is ready to judge the quick and the dead, or why ungodly, impenitent men, must give account to God for their ungodly deeds and hard speeches.

It seems to me that they present another great motive to the duty enjoined in the second verse. Christians are not to live the rest of the time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; first, for the reason contained in the third, fourth, and fifth verses, which we have already illustrated; and secondly, for that contained in this verse, they are not "to live the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God;" "for, for this cause, the gospel was preached to them who were dead;" that is, the great design of the gospel revelation is just to induce men to make, not the lusts of men, but the will of God, the rule and reason of their conduct.

I have already stated some of the reasons why I consider them who are dead, literally "the dead," to be the spiritually dead, those "dead in trespasses and sins." To translate it, the gospel was preached to those who are now dead, though they were alive when the gospel was preached to them, is to give the words a meaning which they will not bear; and to suppose that they mean, that the gospel has been preached to the dead in the separate state, the only meaning they can, consistently with the usage of the language, have, if the term dead is understood in its literal sense, is to suppose them to assert a fact which seems to have no connection with what the apostle is speaking about, and a fact to which there is no reference, except it be in the nineteenth verse in the preceding chapter, in the whole Bible. That the events referred to in the two passages are the same, I have no doubt. "The spirits in prison" there, and "the dead" here, are the same class of persons; and Christ by the Spirit preaching to the former, and the gospel being preached to the latter, are descriptions of the same event. Both the expressions, "spirits in

prison" and "the dead," are figurative expressions. A state of unconversion is often represented as a state of death. "To be carnally-minded is death;" the unconverted man "abideth in death:" when he is converted he "passes from death to life;" while he continues in unregeneracy he is "dead in trespasses and sins." Unconverted Gentiles are represented as "dead in the uncircumcision of their flesh."[1]

Now the gospel is preached to men thus dead, destitute of all spiritual life, utterly incapable of spiritual action and spiritual enjoyment, that by means of it they, through the accompanying energy of the Holy Ghost, may be quickened to a new life, manifesting itself in living and acting not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. Its voice is, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The revelation of the grace of God, which constitutes the gospel, is mainly intended to teach men "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The design of preaching the gospel is to "turn men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God." The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ which it communicates, is intended to enable men to "escape the pollutions of the world, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."[2] Where these ends are not gained, the gospel has been preached in vain. Indeed, in some points of view, it had been better for those whom the gospel leaves still the servants of sin, that it had never been preached to them.

This is obviously a very powerful motive to "live the rest of the time in the flesh not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Thus, thus only, can the great benignant purposes of the gospel revelation be answered to the individual. No man continuing unholy can ever obtain the salvation the gospel announces. Just in the degree in which he is sanctified by the truth, does the truth gain its object.

Taking this view of the passage there would have been no difficulty, had there been no more in the statement than this: "For, for this purpose, viz. that we should no longer live to the lusts of men, but to the will of God," was the gospel preached to "the dead," the unconverted. But there is difficulty, great difficulty, in the words that follow: "that they may be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

The difficulty lies in the first clause, "judged according to men in the flesh;" for were these words not there, the clause that follows, "that they may live according to God in the spirit," might naturally enough be understood as explanatory of the phrase "for this end," and in this case would be of equivalent signification with the phrase in the second verse, "that we may live to the will of God."

It would serve little purpose to state the various attempts which interpreters have made to extort an apposite meaning out of these

[1] See note C. [2] Eph. v. 14. Tit. ii. 11, 12. Acts xxvi. 18. 2 Pet. i. 2–4.

words. Their number, and the extravagance of some of them, clearly show, that this is a passage "hard to be understood." One learned interpreter[1] states plainly that he does not understand the passage, and therefore lets it alone; and I have, in the course of my inquiries, sometimes been disposed to follow his example.

The following appears to me to be probably the meaning and reference of the words. They seem to describe certain consequences of the gospel being preached with effect to the spiritually dead. The direct design of the gospel being preached to them is, that they may believe it; and the certain effect of its being preached to them if they believe it, as well as its design, is, that believing it, they "no longer live the rest of their life to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Such is its designed effect on their character and conduct.

But besides this designed effect on their character and conduct, the gospel when preached to, believed by, and influential on, the spiritually dead, produces certain effects, some of them unfavorable, others of them favorable, on their condition, external or internal. It is to these, I apprehend, the apostle refers, when he speaks of their being "judged according to men in the flesh," but "living according to God in the spirit."

"According to men," that is, plainly, unconverted men (as in the phrase "lusts of men," or the expression, "ye are carnal and walk as men"[2]); so far as men, unconverted, worldly men, are concerned, they, that is, they who have believed the gospel preached to them when dead, are, by depraved and human agency, "judged," that is, condemned, punished, "in the flesh," in the body or in their external circumstances. "According to God," so far as God is concerned, by a holy, Divine agency, they "live," they enjoy true happiness (as the apostle says, "now we *live* if we stand fast in the Lord"[3]); "in the spirit," in the soul, in the inner man, a happiness suited to the wants and capacities of their higher nature. Had "living according to God in the spirit," been contrasted with "living according to men in the flesh," it would have described character; contrasted with being "condemned or punished according to men in the flesh," it plainly describes condition.

The particle translated "that"[4] not only signifies *in order to*, marking design, but also, *so that*, marking effect, as when it is said, "Have they stumbled that they should fall?"[5] that is, "Have they stumbled so as to fall?" This seems its force here: "For this end was the gospel preached to you when spiritually dead, that believing it ye should abandon sin and follow holiness; and having gained its object, the result has been, ye are persecuted in your external circumstances, your body, your reputation, your outward condition, by men; but ye are happy in your mind, in all your spiritual relations and circumstances, in God."

It was so then. "Men spoke against them as evil-doers," they "suffered as Christians" "for well-doing," "for righteousness' sake;" but while thus judged, condemned, punished, so far as men were concerned, "in the flesh," they "lived according to God in the spirit."

[1] Castalio. "Hunc locum non intelligo; ideoque ad verbum transtuli."
[2] 1 Cor. iii. 3. [3] 1 Thess. iii. 8. [4] Ἵνα. [5] Ἵνα. Rom. xi. 11.

They had a "life hid with Christ in God;" they were happy in their spirits, for "the spirit of glory and of God rested on them."

Thus were the apostles "judged according to men in the flesh," when they were beaten before the Sanhedrim, and commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus; and thus did they "live according to God in the spirit," when "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer shame for his name."[1] Thus were Paul and Silas "judged according to men in the flesh," when, by order of the magistrates of Philippi, they were beaten, and, "after many stripes had been laid on them, thrust into the inner prison, and had their feet made fast in the stocks;" and thus did they "live according to God in the spirit," when, "at midnight, they prayed and sang praises to God," with a voice so loud and clear that "the prisoners heard them."

And it is so still. Whenever the gospel believed transforms the character, the individual becomes an object of dislike to worldly men; he is "judged according to men in the flesh;" and the manner in which that dislike is manifested depends on circumstances; it may be in silent contempt, in malignant misrepresentation, in spoiling of goods, in persecution to the death; and just as certainly does he "live to God in the spirit," obtaining "a peace" in God "which passeth all understanding," which, as the world could not give, it cannot take away; a new life so superior to all that he formerly experienced, that, when he looks back to the time that is past, it appears to him as he had been "dead while he lived."

Materially the same sense may be brought out of the words, giving to "that" its more common sense, "to the end that" by interpreting the passage on the same principle as you must interpret the words, "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to you;"[2] that is, God be thanked, that, though you were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to you. So here, "For this cause, that they may give over living to the lusts of men, and begin to live to the will of God, was the gospel preached to the spiritually dead; that they, believing the gospel and yielding to its influence, though persecuted as to their external circumstances by men, may enjoy true spiritual happiness in God."

The only interpretation that can come into competition with this, is that which considers both clauses as referring to the direct and intended effect of the preaching of the gospel; understanding by being "judged in the flesh," the being condemned and punished in reference to that which is depraved in our nature, "the flesh;" having the body of sin destroyed, the being made to deny self; "mortifying our members on the earth," taking up the cross; all which, "according to men," in the estimation of men, unregenerate men, is no better than death; and understanding by "living in the spirit according to God," such an exercise of all their faculties, under the influence of their renewed nature, as in God's estimation deserves the name of life; as if he had said, 'the gospel was preached to the dead in trespasses and sins, that they might become dead to sin, and alive to God, dead in

[1] Acts v. 40, 41; xvi. 22–25. [2] Rom. vi. 17.

the sense in which they were alive; alive in the sense in which they were dead;' which is just equivalent to, "that they may no longer live to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." This is Archbishop Leighton's view of the passage, so far as I can understand it; but I do not see how this sense can be brought out of the words without doing violence to them.

The force of the motive may be thus briefly expressed: 'Ye ought to live the rest of the time in the flesh to the will of God, not to the lusts of men, for that was the grand design of the gospel when preached to you "dead in trespasses and sins;" and though by believing the gospel, and yielding yourselves up to its sanctifying influence, you will certainly expose yourselves to the condemnation and persecution of an ungodly world (which, however, can only affect your external condition), you will find far more than a compensation for this in the life, the happiness, which in your spirits you will obtain from God.'

In the very important, but, as we have found, somewhat difficult, paragraph commencing with the eighteenth verse of the preceding chapter, and ending with the sixth verse of this, the great leading features of the Divine method of transforming depraved human nature are strikingly delineated. Man has gone astray from God, and is living, not to his will but to his own lusts. He has thus incurred the righteous displeasure of God, and brought on himself the dreadful curse of his holy law. That curse rivets, as it were, the chains of his depravity. He is lost, beyond the power of created wisdom and agency to rescue him. But what man, what angels could not do, God has done. The obedience unto the death of the incarnate Son, the divinely-appointed Saviour, the just One, in the room of the unjust, gives full satisfaction to the violated law, and is the propitiation for our sins; securing for *Him* all the power and authority necessary to gain the ultimate ends of his sacrifice. This well-attested record of this mystery of wisdom, righteousness, and love, is the gospel of our salvation, which, attended by the Spirit, finds its way into the understanding, and conscience, and affections of men, transforming them by the renewing of their mind, and leading them to live henceforth no more to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; while, at the same time, the sinner, justified and renewed by the grace of God, has presented to him motives the most powerful and persuasive to induce him to abstain from every kind of evil, and to cultivate holiness in all manner of conversation; and, amid all the sufferings to which he may be exposed from an evil world, is sustained by the energies of that spiritual life in God, the exhaustless source of peace and joy, which they enjoy by their union to him who died for them in weakness, but lives forever by the power of God.

It deeply concerns us all, seriously to inquire whether we, through the atoning death and restored life of our Lord, have become dead to the world and to sin, alive to God and holiness; whether, under the influence of the truth on these subjects, we are living, not as we once did, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. This is the appropriate evidence, this is the only satisfactory evidence, that the

gospel of salvation has come to us not in word only, but in power; that the end for which the gospel is preached to the dead has been gained in us.

Let Christians seek clearer views, more settled convictions, respecting the death of Christ as the great atoning sacrifice, and their own interest in it as not only the price of their pardon, but the means of their sanctification; and let them open their minds and hearts to all those powerful motives, from such a variety of sources, which urge them to live devoted to Him, who died devoted for them; to glorify Him whom they have so long dishonored; to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the world; constantly seeking more and more disconformity to this world, by being more thoroughly "transformed by the renewing of their minds, and proving the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God."

And let those who are still running the mad career of thoughtlessness and sin, living not to the will of God, but to the lusts of men, consider, ere it be too late, what must be the end of these things. Men and brethren, allow me to expostulate with you. You "must give account to Him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead." And that account must be given in not with joy but with grief. That judgment must be condemnation. Indeed, you are condemned already, and you know it, however you may try to strangle the conviction. God, in his word, condemns you, and your consciences condemn you also. Where is the man who dare say, it is right, it is wise, it is safe, to live to the lusts of men, so foolish, so shameful, so ruinous; and not to the will of God, so wise, so benignant, so reasonable, so advantageous; to make human inclination, rather than Divine law, the rule of conduct? What has the time past of your life been, but a blank or a blot, guilty inutility or noxious guilt, inglorious inaction or base activity? and how many years have been thus wasted? In many cases, I am afraid, by far the greater part even of a long life.

Surely "the time that is passed may suffice." Enough, more than enough, of such madness. Dishonor has received sufficient measure. Close the term of infamy. It is time for fairer days to begin their course. Oh! relinquish those foolish and deceitful lusts, to which you have been so long enslaved, and come to Christ, who will bring you to God, that you may know him and love him, and serve him and enjoy him. In him there is spirit and life; dead though you be, he will enable you to live this heavenly life which the apostle enjoins; this life to the will of God, his God and your God, his Father and your Father.

Delay no longer this happy exchange of the slavery of sin for the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Put it off till to-morrow, and it may become impossible. The seal of eternity, ere to-morrow, may be put on thy thraldom. Thinkest thou that it is irksome to do the will of God? Think that it will be found more than irksome to suffer his wrath forever. But it is not irksome. Ah! thou knowest not how sweet they find his service who have tried it, and who, with one voice cry, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; his yoke is easy, his burden is light."

Think not to say within thyself, I will abandon the service of the lusts of men by and by; I will live to the will of God; though not now, yet afterwards. Ah! who can make thee sure of *the will* or of *the afterwards?* And if afterwards, why not now? Hast thou not served sin long enough? May not the time past suffice? Is it not more than enough? He who does not live to God, is "dead while he liveth." He who lives to sin, lives in a dark dungeon, laden with fetters; he who lives to God, dwells in light, walks at liberty. The uncertain wildfires of worldly pleasures, which but light those who follow them to their doom, will soon be extinguished in the blackness of darkness forever. But he that followeth Christ, in living to the will of God, "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "His path shall be like that of the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."[1]

NOTE A. p. 556.

Amyraut, in his paraphrase, gives the sense very clearly:—"Mais encore nous devons armer de cette bonne pensée contre toutes sortes de tentations au mal, 'que celui qui a souffert en cette nature humaine, n'a desormais plus de commerce avec le peché.'" And Gerhard,—"Ὅτι rectius accipitur expositive, exponit enim Apostolus illam cogitationem ἔννοιαν qua nos vult armari: hæc cogitatio erit vobis instar firmissimi scuti et munimenti contra peccatum." Erasmus Schmid's version is,—"Eadem cogitatione armamini, *nempe*, quod qui passus est carne destitit a peccato." Beza's version is of the same purport.

NOTE B. p. 570.

I am aware that the words rendered "hath ceased from sin," have been translated "has caused sin to cease;" bringing out this sense—'Christ, by suffering in the flesh, has caused sin to cease; has finished transgression, made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness.' This is a truth, and a truth suggested, as we have seen, by the words; but to make them directly express this, requires very great violence to be done to the original language. The words have also been rendered "has ceased from sin-offering;" bringing out the idea, that his one perfect offering has rendered unnecessary any farther sacrifice for sin. This is true, too, and, like the other, substantially implied in the statement; but it is to give an unusual meaning to the word "sin," and it is to give the same word two distinct meanings in the same sentence; for certainly "sin," in the first clause of the first verse, does not mean "sin-offering."

NOTE C. p. 586.

"Propter hoc enim et mortuis, evangelicatus est,—nobis, qui quondam videlicit extabamus infideles."—CLEM. ALEX. Adumbrat. ad. 1 Ep. Pet. Edit. Pott. Tom. ii. p. 1007.—Apud Beausobre.

"Simplicissime per 'mortuos' quibus Evangelium prædicatum esse Apostolus asserit, intelliguntur spiritualiter, in peccatis, mortui."—GERHARD. "Fieri potest, ut mortuos dixerit infideles h. e. in anima mortuos. Non cogit apud inferos intelligi."—AUGUST. Ep. xcix. ad Euodium. "De mortuis dicit Apostolus quod judicentur carne. Jam vero uaturaliter mortui non habent carnem; ergo intelligitur de homnibus in terra viventibus."—LUTHER. According to Maimonides (More Nevochim), it was a proverb among the Jews: "Impii etiam viventes vocantur mortui."

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[1] Leighton.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

SOBRIETY AND WATCHING UNTO PRAYER ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED.

1 Pet. iv. 7.—But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

In the preceding part of this chapter, the apostle presents those to whom he wrote with a general view of christian duty, as "living not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God;" points out to them the only and effectual means of realizing this view of christian duty in their own experience—the keeping constantly before their minds the great characteristic truth of the gospel, that the perfect and accepted atonement made by Christ, has secured for himself, and for all interested in him, rest from sin; and unfolds to them the powerful motives rising out of the statement he had made of the leading principles of evangelical truth, which urge them to follow the course prescribed to them. In the subsequent context, he proceeds to enjoin the cultivation of a variety of particular christian dispositions, and the performance of a variety of particular christian duties, which the circumstances in which they were placed peculiarly required. Two of these injunctions, with the special ground on which they stand, lie before us in the verse which we have read as the text of the following discourse.

The subject which these words bring before the mind may be treated in two different ways. We may either illustrate, first, the statement on which the apostle founds his injunctions, "The end of all things is at hand;" and then the injunction built on this statement, "Be sober, and watch unto prayer;" or we may reverse the order, and consider, first, the duties which the apostle enjoins, and then the motive by which he urges to their performance. It does not matter much which of these two plans we adopt; but, as a choice must be made, we, upon the whole, prefer the latter.

I.—THE DUTIES ENJOINED BY THE APOSTLE.

Let us then proceed to consider the duties which the apostle enjoins. They are—sobriety, and watching unto prayer. "Be sober, and watch unto prayer."

§ 1.—*Sobriety.*

The first duty enjoined is sobriety—"Be sober." In the common usage of the English language, the word sobriety is almost exclusively

appropriated to denote temperance in drinking, abstinence from the undue use of intoxicating liquors. That this is a christian duty, there can be no doubt. Drunkenness is enumerated among the works of the flesh, the indulgence in which excludes a man from inheriting the kingdom of God; and the command is most explicit—"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." And there can be as little doubt that this vice is utterly inconsistent with that virtue, which, under the name of sobriety, is in our text, and in so many other passages of Scripture, enjoined.

It is certain, however, that the word *sober* had a much more extensive signification at the time our translation of the Scriptures was made than it has at present; a signification more in accordance with the sense of the original word of which it is the rendering. The word here rendered sober [1] (for, as we shall immediately see, the word rendered watchful here is often translated sober), is a term which, in its primary signification, refers rather to a physical than to a moral state of the faculties of mind. It signifies to be in the full use of the rational faculties, as opposed to mental alienation or derangement. Thus, it is said of the demoniac who was cured by our Lord, that he was found by his countrymen "sitting, clothed, and in his right mind," [2] sober, the same word as used here. The Apostle Paul, in his noble reply to the unmanly interruption of the Roman governor, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning hath made thee mad," says—"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak the words of soberness." My words are the words not of a madman, but of one in full possession of his reason. And, speaking of himself and his apostolic brethren, he says, "Whether we be beside ourselves," that is, 'act like madmen in the world's estimation,' "it is to God," that is, 'from regard to the will of God, from a desire to promote the cause of God;' "whether we be sober," that is, 'act cautiously and prudently, like men in the full possession and exercise of all their faculties, "it is for your sakes;" that is, 'in order to promote your welfare.' [3]

This is the primary meaning of the word, and it is probably with a direct reference to that, that the drunkard is considered as specially unworthy of the appellation sober, of a sound mind. The man who indulges in the undue use of intoxicating liquors, behaves like an idiot, a person devoid of "discourse of reason;" and, by the continued use of them, he brings himself into a state of madness. Certainly, as Solomon says, the man who allows himself to be deceived by wine, that mocker, "is not wise;" and he who carefully avoids the habit, so far proves himself to be a man in his right senses, a man of sane mind.

The word, however, though originally significant of a physical state of the rational faculties, is usually employed in the New Testament

[1] Σωφρονήσατε. Σώφρων Græcis dicitur cui σῶς φρὴν, *mens sana* est, atque adeo qui *mania*, ut pote illius contrario, non laborat. Σώφρων, nullis in transversum actus affectibus, recte de rebus judicat, justumque singulis pretium statuit, atque adeo, media incedendo via, nec in excessu, nec defectu impingit: omnia præmeditate suscipit et cum *animi sani* temperie, consequenter illud ipsis Gentibus adeo commendatum: μηδὲν ἄγαν *ne quid nimis* sedulo observat.—SCHRAMM in Tit. i. 8.

[2] Mark v. 15. [3] Acts xxvi. 24, 25. 2 Cor. v. 13.

as descriptive of a moral state of the mind. What is its precise signification will best appear from looking at the passages in which it, and the words derived from it, are employed by the sacred writers. The Apostle Paul exhorts every man "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly;" that is, to think justly, and therefore humbly.[1] The same apostle, in the second chapter of his first Epistle to Timothy, exhorts christian women, instead of decking themselves with broidered hair and gold, or pearls or costly array, to "adorn themselves with shamefacedness," that is, with modesty; "and with sobriety,"[2] that is, with prudence or moderation; and they are required, verse 15, to "continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety," that is, prudence or gravity. In the 3d chapter of the same epistle, he tells us "a christian bishop must be sober," wise, prudent, moderate. In his second Epistle to Timothy, he describes the spirit or disposition which Christians have received from God, as "not the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind," or sobriety. The spirit of Christianity is not a timid, crouching, time-serving spirit; it is an energetic, benignant, wise, moderate spirit. In the Epistle to Titus, he states, that "a bishop must be sober," that is, wise, prudent, moderate; he requires "the aged men to be sober," which is there plainly something different from temperate; he requires the aged women to teach the young women to be "discreet;" and he commands Titus to "exhort the young men also to be sober-minded." In all these instances sobriety is plainly wisdom, prudence, moderation. In the same epistle he also states, that "the grace of God, which brings salvation to all, when understood and believed, teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly;" to live wisely in reference to themselves, righteously in regard to their fellow-men, and piously in reference to God.[3] These are all the passages in the New Testament in which the word before us, or those connected with it, are employed; and, on considering them, there can be no great difficulty in determining the meaning of the exhortation before us, "Be sober."

Some interpreters consider it an exhortation to prudence, practical wisdom; others to temperance, in the extensive sense in which that word is employed in the New Testament, moderation in all things, the right regulation of our desires and pursuits. I am strongly disposed to think the apostle's exhortation includes both of these things, and perhaps something more. I apprehend it is equivalent to, 'Exercise a sound mind in reference both to "things seen and temporal," and to "things unseen and eternal." "Be not unwise," be not like children; or, if in malice ye be as children, "in understanding be ye as men." Take heed not to be imposed on. Beware of mistaking shadows for realities, and realities for shadows. Look at things in their comparative importance, and act accordingly. Be sagacious. Be not content with partial views of the subjects in which you have so deep an interest. Look at all sides of a subject. Think before you speak. Reflect before you act. "Walk in wisdom," that is, wisely, both in regard to those who are within, and those who are without; "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."'

[1] Rom. xii. 3. [2] 1 Tim. ii. 9. [3] Tit. i. 8; ii. 2, 4, 6, 12, 13.

If Christians are thus morally sound-minded, they will discover this in the way in which they think, and feel, and act, in reference to this present world. They will show that they have formed a just, and therefore a moderate, sober, estimate both of its goods and evils. They will not inordinately love the one, nor fear the other. They will not rate very high its wealth, its honors, or its pleasures. They will be moderate in their desires to possess these, and moderate in their exertions to obtain them; moderate in their attachment to them while they are possessed of them, and moderate in their regrets for them when they are deprived of them. "They who have wives will be as if they had none," knowing that earthly relations, the closest and most endearing, must soon be dissolved; "they who weep as though they wept not," knowing that earthly sorrows, however deep, will soon be over forever; "they who rejoice as though they rejoiced not," knowing that earthly delights, however exquisite, are shadowy, uncertain, short-lived; "those who buy as though they possessed not," knowing that human possessions are insecure and unsatisfactory, that, "as we brought nothing into the world, we can carry nothing out of it," and feeling that "a man's life consists not in the abundance of his possessions;" "they who use this world as not abusing it," knowing that we must give account to the Supreme Judge for the use of our property; and that, unimportant as wealth is in itself, it is awfully important viewed as connected with eternity. The great truths, that "the fashion of the world passeth away," and that "the things which are unseen are eternal," will be allowed the full influence which a sound, prudent, wise mind perceives they ought to have on the whole of the temper and conduct.[1] This is christian sobriety.

The substance of the apostle's exhortation, then, is, 'Exercise a sound mind, a mind enlightened and transformed by christian truth, in reference to both worlds; and exhibit its practical conclusions in your wise and prudent conduct, especially in your habitual moderation in thought, feeling, and action with regard to "things seen and temporal," the influence of which intoxicates and infatuates the great body of mankind, and makes them act the part of children and fools.'

§ 2.—"*Watching unto prayer.*"

The second duty enjoined by the apostle is watching unto prayer. Prayer is well defined in our Shorter Catechism to be, "the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." This is a primary, essential duty of religion. It is the natural expression of that state of mind and heart, of thought and affection, in which religion consists. It is to religion what breath is to life. It betokens its existence, and it is the means of its continuance. It is very clearly enjoined and very strongly enforced, both by our Lord and his apostles: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." "Men ought always to pray," to continue praying,

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 29–31.

"and not to faint." "Be careful about nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your request known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." "Continue instant in prayer." "Pray without ceasing." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "Is any man afflicted? let him pray."[1]

This important duty is not, however, that which the apostle here enjoins. His command is not, Pray; but Watch unto prayer. He takes it for granted that they did pray, that they could not but pray; but he is anxious that their prayers should be such as to gain in the highest degree the important ends of prayer. It deserves notice that the word prayer is in the plural form. It is watch unto prayers.[2] Some have supposed that the apostle refers here to the four species of devotional exercise which Paul mentions in his Epistle to Timothy, "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks."[3] John Huss is probably nearer the truth when he finds emphasis in the mode of expression, and says, "Watch unto prayers, not to one, but many, for 'men ought always to pray, and not to faint.'" That prayers are to be offered, habitually offered, the apostle counts certain. He is not a Christian at all who does not pray, habitually pray. But the apostle is desirous that they should "watch unto prayer."

The language is peculiar. What is its meaning? what is meant by watching? what is meant by watching unto prayer? First, what is meant by watching? This is not the word which is most frequently used to express the idea of watching, as a shepherd does his flock, or a sentinel that committed to his charge. In the original signification[4] it refers to a physical state of the body and mind, rather than to a moral state of the mind. It is descriptive of that state in which all the faculties are awake and active, as opposed to the state of delusion and stupor which intoxication induces; and answers nearly to our word sober, in the limited sense in which it is often used. It is always, in the New Testament, employed to express a state of mind. What that state of mind is, will best appear in this, as in the previous case, by attending to the comparatively few instances in which the word, and those connected with it, occur in the New Testament. "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak it to your shame;"[5] that is, shake off the mental delusion and stupor in which the intoxication of error has involved you, that, with clear and excited faculties, you may attend to this most important subject. "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober;"[6] the same word as we have here; that is, be wakeful; let us watch, and, that we may watch, let us be wakeful. "Let us who are of the day be sober," the same word, be wakeful, "not sleep, as do others." "A bishop must be sober,[7] vigilant," wakeful; the same word we have here. "The bishops' wives," or the female superintendents, it may be either, "must be," not slanderers,

[1] Matt. vii. 7, 8. Luke xviii. 1. Phil. iv. 6, 7. Col. iv. 2. 1 Thess. v. 17. James v. 13, 16.
[2] Εἰς τὰς προσευχάς. [3] 1 Tim. ii. 1. Δεήσεις, προσευχὰς, ἐντεύξεις, εὐχαριστίας.
[4] Νήψατε, not Γρηγορήσατε, as ch. v. 7. [5] 1 Cor. xv. 34.
[6] 1 Thess v. 6–8. [7] 1 Tim. iii. 2.

but "sober,"[1] the same word. It is difficult to see why our translators should have rendered the same word, when used of male superintendents, "vigilant," when used of female superintendents, "sober." In both cases wakeful vigilance is the idea: "But watch thou in all things." Keep awake, and be active in the discharge of all thy duties.[2] "Speak the words that become sound doctrine, that the aged men be sober,"[3] vigilant in the margin. The only other places where the word occurs in the New Testament, are in this Epistle: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,"[4] where the idea of wakefulness or vigilance seems better to suit the context than sobriety, either in its stricter or more extended meaning. "Be sober, be vigilant;"[5] be wakeful, and not only be wakeful, but actively watch. From all these passages it seems plain that the apostle's exhortation is, Be wakeful, be on the alert; look around you; with excited attention actively exert your mind.

But what are we to understand by being watchful, or watching unto prayer? The phrase has received two translations. Be watchful in prayer, that is, while engaged in prayer; and be watchful, in order to prayer. There can be no doubt that they misinterpret the passage who refer it to the vigils or nightly prayers of the ancient church. This is an interpretation which very properly may take its place alongside of that which would render "repent,"[6] by 'do penance.' The primitive Christians were obliged to have their common "prayers," as well as "the doctrine" and "the breaking of bread," during the night, for they durst not assemble during the day. But there does not seem any reference to that here, which was indeed more a matter of necessity than of choice; not a duty in itself, but only in the particular circumstances in which they were placed. All that is included in either of the two renderings mentioned, and something more, is expressed in a translation, which, if the words do not demand, they certainly admit. "Be watchful, or watch, in reference to prayer."

Vigilance requires to be exerted in reference to all duties. We need to watch as to the principles in which they originate, the manner in which they are performed, the motives which influence us in performing them, the end we seek to gain by performing them. But there is special need of vigilance in reference to prayer. Christians should be watchful as to proper subjects of prayer, as to fit opportunities for prayer, as to hindrances from, and in, prayer, as to the proper manner of prayer, and as to the results or consequences of prayer.

The attention of Christians should be actively alive to the circumstances,—in the world, in the church, in the various spheres of relative duty which they occupy, in their own individual experience,—which ought to be made the subjects of prayer; and in every case see that what they pray for be agreeable to God's will, something they are warranted to ask, and which he has promised to grant. They should look at everything in this particular aspect, that so "in everything they may in prayer and supplication make their requests known to God."

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 11. [2] 2 Tim. iv. 5. [3] Tit. ii. 2.
[4] 1 Pet. i. 13. [5] 1 Pet. v. 8. [6] Μετανοεῖτε.

They should wakefully observe what may be fit opportunities for escaping from the world to hold communion with God, that they may carefully improve them. Thus did David watch unto prayer, when he said, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice."

They should watch against worldliness of mind, and especially against wilful transgressions, remembering that, "if we regard iniquity in our heart, God will not hear us."[1]

They should watch in reference to the manner of prayer when engaged in it; taking care that it be prayer, and not merely saying prayers; that they serve him who is a Spirit, with their spirits "in spirit and truth;" that they "present a living sacrifice;" that they "yield rational worship;" that they "pray in the spirit," depending on the promised influence of the Holy Ghost as "the Spirit of grace and of supplications;" that they pray "in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is as a wave of the sea driven of the wind and tossed—let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord;" that they pray with intense desire, being "instant in prayer;" that they pray in humble submission, saying, "Not my will, but thine be done."[2]

Finally, they should watch in reference to the results of prayer. Like Habakkuk, they should "stand on their watch, and set them upon the tower to see what he will say to them." "I will direct my prayer to thee," says David, "and look up."[3] Christians "should look after their prayers, and hear what the Lord will speak, observe what the Lord will do; that if he grant what they ask, they may be thankful; that if he deny, they may be patient and humbly inquire the cause; that if he defer, they may continue to pray and wait, and not faint. They should look up, or look out, as they who have shot an arrow, looking to see how near it has come to the mark. We lose much of the comfort of our prayers for want of observing the returns of them."[4]

II.—MOTIVE URGING TO SOBRIETY, AND WATCHING UNTO PRAYER—"THE END OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND."

Let us now, secondly, attend to the motive by which the apostle enforces his exhortation. "The end of all things is at hand;" therefore "be sober, and watch unto prayer."

"The end of all things" is a phrase, which, taken by itself, most naturally calls up the idea of the final termination of the present order of things, which is so often mentioned in the sacred writings. A period is fixed, when He who established the present mundane system shall proclaim, "It is done," and the dead shall live, and the living shall be changed, and all shall be judged; death shall be swallowed up in life, and time be no more, having been lost in eternity; "the heavens and the earth that now are shall be dissolved, the

[1] Psal. lv. 17; lxvi. 18.

[2] John iv. 24. Rom. xii. 1. Λογικὴν λατρείαν. Jude 20. James i. 6, 7. Col. iv. 1. Luke xxii. 42.

[3] Habak. ii. 1. Psal. v. 3.

[4] Matthew Henry.

heavens passing away with a great noise, the earth also, and the works that are therein being burnt up, the very elements melting with fervent heat; and the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness is, and shall dwell," shall take their place. These solemn truths are well fitted to operate as powerful motives on all who believe them, to be sober, and to watch unto prayer. "What manner of persons ought we to be," says the apostle; "in all holy conversation and godliness," "looking for, and hastening to, the coming of this day of God." "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, be diligent, that ye be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." "He who," to use the language of a great writer, "has seen, as through a telescope, the glorious appearance of the Supreme Judge, the solemn state of his majestic person, the splendid pomp of his magnificent and vastly numerous retinue, the obsequious throng of glorious celestial creatures, doing homage to their eternal king; the swift flight of his royal guards sent forth into the four winds to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings; the universal attention of all to that loud-sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the inward caverns of the earth, and resounds through every part of the encircling heavens; the many myriads of joyful expectants, arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and contending upwards to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly host; the judgment set; the books opened; the frightful, amazed looks of surprised wretches; the equal administration of the final judgment; the adjudication of all to their eternal states; the heavens rolled up as a scroll; the earth and all things therein consumed and burnt up:"[1] Surely that man must be *sober*, deeply, calmly considerate, knowing how present character and conduct is to affect future events; and maintaining a steady restraint and moderation of all his affections and passions in reference to a world, the fashion of which is thus to pass away: Surely he must watch unto prayer, watch and pray always, that he may be accounted worthy to escape "the perdition of ungodly men," and "stand before the Son of man," in the judgment. This is a powerful motive, fitted to influence the minds and hearts and conduct of all believers in all countries and ages till the end come.

But there are obvious difficulties in this mode of interpretation. "The end of all things is" said so to be "at hand;" that is, very near. Now, eighteen centuries have well-nigh run their course since these words were uttered, and the end of the world has not come—nay, when we think of the number and magnitude of the events that must take place before it arrives, we cannot concur with those who are of opinion that it is very soon to take place. "The end is not yet."

To meet and remove this difficulty, it has been remarked by some, that the age of the Messiah is the last age; that no such great event as the flood, or the giving of the law, or the coming of the Word in flesh, stands between them who live under that age and the end of the world; so that it may be said to be *near* all who live under the gospel economy; by others, that it is *near*, if not in the calculations

[1] Howe. Vanity of man as mortal.

of time, in those of eternity, with him, with whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;" and by a third class, that as the state of every man is fixed at death, that as death leaves him judgment will find him, the end of all things *to him* is not far off. I must say that these modes of getting over the difficulty do not appear to me to be satisfactory; and that the apostle's obvious design is to intimate that the events referred to in the phrase, "the end of all things," were just about to take place.

Their view of the matter is still less satisfactory who tell us that the apostles really did expect the immediate dissolution of the world. We know there were persons who so misunderstood such statements as that before us; but we find the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, warning them against such a mistake, and telling them that the day of Christ, in the sense of the day of the last judgment, was not at hand.[1] Besides, it is not with what the apostles, exercising their own unassisted judgments, expected, but with what the inspiring Spirit spoke by them, that we have to do.

After some deliberation, I have been led to adopt the opinion of those who hold, that "the end of all things" here, is the entire and final end of the Jewish economy in the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the holy people. That was at hand; for this epistle seems to have been written a very short while before these events took place, not improbably after the commencement of "the wars and rumors of war," of which our Lord spake. This view will not appear strange to any one who has carefully weighed the terms in which our Lord had predicted these events, and the close connection which the fulfilment of these predictions had with the interests and duties of Christians, whether in Judea or in Gentile countries.

It is quite plain, that, in our Lord's predictions, the expressions "the end," and probably "the end of the world," are used in reference to the entire dissolution of the Jewish economy.[2] The events of that period were very minutely foretold; and our Lord distinctly stated that the existing generation should not pass away till all things, respecting "this end," should be fulfilled. This was to be a season of suffering to all; of trial, severe trial, to the followers of Christ; of dreadful judgment on his Jewish opposers, and of glorious triumph to his religion. To this period there are repeated references in the apostolical epistles: "Knowing the time," says the Apostle Paul, "that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." "Be patient," says the Apostle James; "stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." "The judge standeth before the door."[3] Our Lord's predictions must have been very familiar to the minds of Christians at the time this was written. They must have been looking forward with mingled awe and joy, fear and hope, to their accomplishment; "looking for the things which were coming upon the earth;" and it was peculiarly natural for Peter to refer to these events, and to refer to them in words similar

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 1–3. [2] Matt. xxiv. 3, 6, 14, 34. Mark xiii. 30. Luke xxi. 32.
[3] Rom. xiii. 11, 12. James v. 8, 9.

to those used by our Lord, as he was one of the disciples, who, sitting with his Lord in full view of the city and temple, heard these predictions uttered.

The Christians inhabiting Judea had a peculiar interest in these predictions and their fulfilment. But all Christians had a deep interest in them. The Christians of the regions in which those to whom Peter wrote resided, were chiefly converted Jews. As Christians, they had cause to rejoice in the prospect of the accomplishment of these predictions, as greatly confirming the truth of Christianity, and removing some of the greatest obstructions in the way of its progress; such as persecutions by the Jews, and the confounding of Christianity with Judaism, on the part of the Gentiles, who were accustomed to view its professors as a Jewish sect. But while they rejoiced, they had cause to "rejoice with trembling," as their Lord had plainly intimated that it was to be a season of severe trial to his friends, as well as of fearful vengeance against his enemies. "The end of all things" which was at hand, seems to be the same thing as the judgment of the quick and the dead, which the Lord was ready to enter on,—the judgment, the time for which was come; which was to begin with the house of God, and then to be executed fully on those who obeyed not the gospel of God, the unbelieving Jews; in which the righteous should scarcely be saved, and the ungodly and wicked should be fearfully punished.

The contemplation of such events as just at hand, was well fitted to operate as a motive to sobriety, and vigilance unto prayer. These were just the tempers and exercises peculiarly called for in such circumstances; and they are just the dispositions and employments required by our Lord when he speaks of those days of trial and wrath. "Take heed to yourselves," says our Lord, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come on you unawares: for as a snare shall it come upon all who dwell on the earth. Watch, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are about to come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."[1] It is difficult to believe that the apostle had not these very words in his mind when he wrote the passage now before us.

While these exhortations had a peculiar appropriateness to those to whom they were originally addressed, while they received peculiar enforcement from the circumstances in which they were placed, they are plainly exhortations to which Christians, in all countries and ages, are called to attend; and especially when placed in circumstances similar in any way to those in which they were primarily given. We are obviously placed in such circumstances. There is now, as then, and to a still greater extent, a breaking up of old systems. Dynasties and hierarchies are shaking into dissolution. Society is in one of the great states of transition, which occur but at distant intervals in the history of our race. Seldom has the state of our times been more graphically and justly described, than in the words of a living writer—"What times are coming upon the earth we know not; but

[1] Luke xxi. 34–36.

the general expectation of persons of all characters in all nations, is an instinct implanted by God to warn us of a coming storm. Not one nation, but all; not one class of thinkers, but all,—they who fear, and they who hope, and who hope and fear things opposite; they who are immersed in their worldly schemes, and they who look for some coming of God's kingdom; they who watch this world's signs, and they who watch for the next—alike have their eye intently fixed on somewhat that is coming; though whether it be the vials of his wrath or the glories of his kingdom, or whether the one shall be herald to the other, none can tell. They who calculate what is likely, speak of it; they who cannot, *feel* its coming. The spirits of the unseen world seem to be approaching to us, and 'awe comes upon us and trembling, which maketh all bones to shake.' There is "upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth." Times of trouble there have been before; but such a time in which everything, everywhere, tends in one direction to one mighty struggle of one sort—of faith with infidelity, lawlessness with rule, Christ with Antichrist, there seems never to have been till now." "God warneth us, by the very swiftness with which all things are moving around us, that it is HE who is impelling them. Man cannot impart such speed, nor rouse the winds from the four quarters of the heavens, nor bring men's varying wills into a uniform result; and therewith he warns us to beware how we attempt to guide what he is thus manifestly governing."[1]

The end of many things seems indeed approaching. Popery, though making convulsive struggles, must ere long expire. Babylon is repairing her battlements, only to make her fall the more signal. The long captivity of Israel is drawing to its close. The Mohammedan delusion is effete. The idols are about to be abolished. The sanctuary is about to be cleansed. Political despotism and ecclesiastical tyranny are doomed. But before the end of these things, what "wars and rumors of wars," what siftings of men and systems! What struggles, what sacrifices, what sufferings are coming, are at hand! What need of faith and patience, of dependence and exertion, of caution and vigor! Never since the destruction of the Jewish economy was there a louder call to Christians to attend to the inspired declarations, "Be sober, and watch unto prayer."

[1] Pusey.

DISCOURSE XIX.

ON THE MAINTENANCE AND MANIFESTATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE.[1]

1 Pet. iv. 8–11.—And, above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling! In the sacred services of the forenoon, we have, in the most solemn manner, recognized the intimate relation in which we stand to each other as Christians. We have declared, that "though many, we are one body, having partaken of one bread," "the bread which came down from heaven, and has been given for the life of the world;" and "having all drunk into one Spirit," "the Spirit of love, and power, and of a sound mind," which Jesus being glorified has given to all who believe in him. We have, over the instituted emblems of the holy, suffering humanity of our Lord, made the good profession, that we have one God and Father, Jehovah; one Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; one faith, the faith of his gospel; one baptism, the baptism of his Spirit; one hope, the hope of his salvation. We have avowed ourselves brethren in Christ, and pledged ourselves to perform all the mutual duties which rise out of a relation so intimate and so sacred.

It cannot, then, be inopportune to direct your attention to an inspired account of some of those duties; and such an account is contained in the paragraph I have just read, which plainly refers to the temper and conduct towards each other by which Christians should be characterized. The whole truth on this subject may be briefly stated. The entire duty of Christians to each other is summed up in one word, love; brotherly love. The *maintenance* of brotherly love, that is the temper by which Christians should be characterized; the *manifestation* of brotherly love, that is the conduct by which Christians should be characterized.

In the text, both of these are plainly enjoined and powerfully enforced. The maintenance of brotherly love is thus enjoined: "Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves." And it is thus enforced: "for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." The mani-

[1] This discourse was delivered immediately after the administration of the Lord's Supper.

festation of brotherly love is thus enjoined: "Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, so let him minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." And it is thus enforced: "that God may in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ." The *maintenance* and *manifestation* of the love of the brethren, *enjoined* and *recommended*, are thus obviously the substance of the text; and to unfold the meaning of the injunctions, and to point out the force of the recommendations, are the objects I shall endeavor to gain in the following discourse.

I.—THE MAINTENANCE OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

§ 1.—*The duty explained.*

And first, of the *maintenance* of brotherly love. "Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." The injunction first calls for our consideration: "Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves."[1]

In the ordinary use of language, charity is expressive either of almsgiving, or of that disposition which leads a man to take fully as favorable a view of the character and conduct of other men as facts will justify. In Scripture, however, it is never employed in either of these senses. It is uniformly used as equivalent to the word "love" in its highest sense; and it would have prevented some hazardous misapprehensions and misinterpretations had the original term been uniformly thus rendered. I have had occasion to remark elsewhere, that "there is a love which every man owes to every other man, without reference to his spiritual state or character, merely because he is a man,—a sincere desire to promote his welfare." This is the love which the Apostle Paul, with obvious propriety, represents as "the fulfilling of the law," so far as it refers to our duties to our fellow-men; for he who is under its influence can do no ill to any man; he cannot interfere injuriously with another's personal property or reputation, but on the contrary must, as he has opportunity, "do good to all men." Good-will is the essence, indeed the sole component element, of this love.

The love referred to in the text is obviously more limited in its range, and, for that very reason, much more comprehensive in its elementary principles. It is not love towards all men that the apostle here enjoins, but "love among themselves." This affection is called "the love of the brethren," "brotherly kindness," to contradistinguish it from the benevolent regard which should be cherished towards all human beings; for though all men are brethren, as they

[1] The subject of this section has already been considered in Discourses VI., XII., and XV. I have preferred laying myself open to the charge of self-repetition, rather than either, by mere reference to these discourses, giving this discourse a mangled appearance, or, by studiously seeking novelty in the form of expression, running the risk of injuring the substance of the illustration of brotherly love. Similar reasons have led to similar repetitions in other parts of these volumes.

have one Father, "one God has created them," they are not all brethren in the christian sense of that expression. The appellation is limited to what has always been a comparatively small class of persons, genuine Christians. The affection spoken of in the text can be exercised only by them; it can be exercised only to them. A man who is unchristian, who is anti-christian, in his opinions, and temper, and conduct, may highly esteem, may tenderly love a true Christian, but he cannot cherish to him the love which Christians have "among themselves," "brotherly kindness:" he loves him not because he is, but notwithstanding that he is, a Christian. A Christian may love, he ought to love, he does love, all mankind; he desires the happiness of every being capable of happiness; he esteems what is estimable, he loves what is amiable, he admires what is admirable; he pities what is suffering wherever he meets with it; but he cannot extend beyond the sacred pale the love which those within it have "among themselves;" he cannot regard with brotherly kindness any one but a christian brother. None but a Christian can be either the object or the subject of this benevolent affection. None but a Christian can either be the agent or the recipient in the kind offices in which it finds expression.

This limitation is matter not of choice but of necessity. Most gladly would the Christian regard all his fellow-men as fellow-Christians, if they would but allow him to do so, by becoming Christians; but till they do so, it is in the nature of things impossible that he should feel toward them as if they were what they are not. This affection originates in the possession of a peculiar mode of thinking and feeling, produced in the mind by the Holy Spirit, through the knowledge and belief of christian truth, which naturally leads those who are thus distinguished to a sympathy of mind and heart, of thought and affection, with all who, under the same influence, have been led to entertain the same views and to cherish the same dispositions. They love one another "in the truth, for the truth's sake that dwelleth in them, and shall be with them forever."[1]

This circumstance, which necessarily limits this principle as to its sphere of operation, gives it a greater intensity and activity in that sphere, as well as much greater comprehension of elementary principles. It includes good-will in its highest degree; but to this it adds moral esteem, complacential delight, tender sympathy. This it does in every instance; but the degree in which these elementary principles are to be found, in individual cases of brotherly kindness, depends on a variety of circumstances; and chiefly on the degree in which he who exercises it, and he to whom it is exercised, approach the completeness and perfection of the christian character. Every Christian loves every other Christian, when he knows him; but the more accomplished the Christian is, whether the subject or object of brotherly love, the more does he put forth or draw forth its holy, benignant influence.

The end of all love is the good or the happiness of its object, as that happiness is conceived of by its subject. The great end which christian brotherly love contemplates, is the well-being of its object,

[1] 2 John 2.

viewed as a christian man; his deliverance from ignorance, and error, and sin, in all their forms and all their degrees; his progressive, and ultimately his complete, happiness, in entire conformity to the mind and will of God; the unclouded sense of the Divine favor, the uninterrupted enjoyment of the Divine fellowship, the being like "the ever-blessed" Holy, Holy, Holy One. It does not overlook any of the interests of its object; but it views them all in reference, in subordination, to the enjoyment of "the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory."

This is "the love among themselves" of which the apostle speaks; and his injunction with regard to it is, "Above all things, have fervent love among yourselves." The original word rendered "fervent" is a very expressive one.[1] Its primitive and proper signification is, extensive and wide-reaching; and, when applied to love, it describes a benevolent affection, which takes a wide view of the capacities for happiness of its objects, and which seeks its gratification in having all these capacities completely filled; the love expressed in the words of the apostle—"this also we wish, even your perfection;" or, in his prayer, "that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." Nothing short of the perfect holiness, the perfect happiness, of its objects, can satisfy it.

This term is also used to signify *intensity;* as when it is said of our Lord, that, "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." The love which the apostle calls on Christians to maintain, is not cold, not even lukewarm; it is fervent love; an active principle like *fire;* not lying dormant in the mind, but influencing all the powers of action; a love which will make the exertion or suffering necessary to gain its purposes, be readily engaged in and submitted to.

This word, too, is employed to signify *continuance*, as when it is said, that "prayer was made without ceasing for Peter," when Herod had cast him into prison, intending that he should never come out but to his execution. The love here referred to is love that is to last for life, and which even death is not to extinguish. It is an extensive, intense, permanent affection, which the apostle exhorts Christians to maintain towards each other.

The precise import of his exhortation differs somewhat, according to the place you give to the epithet "fervent" in it. If, with our translators, you read "Have fervent charity among yourselves," the word *have* has the sense of *hold.* He takes for granted that as Christians they were in possession of this fervent love, and his exhortation is to hold it fast. Let not your fervent love wax cold. If, with other interpreters, and fully as much in conformity with the construction of the original text, we read, "Have love among yourselves, *fervent,*" the apostle takes for granted that they had love among themselves; if they had not they were not Christians at all; and his exhortation to them is, 'See that your love be in extent, in intensity, and in continuance, what it ought to be.' In this case, the passage is exactly parallel with that in chapter i. 22, where he takes for granted, that they had "purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren;" and exhorts them to "see that

[1] Ἐκτενῆ.

they love one another with a pure heart fervently." The exhortation unites in it both of Paul's exhortations in reference to the same subject: "Be kindly affectioned to one another, in brotherly love:" [1] that is, let your love be intense, and "Let brotherly love continue;" that is, let your love be permanent.

The only other point in the apostle's injunction to the maintenance of brotherly love that requires illustration, is the qualifying phrase, "above all things." [2] Some have supposed that the apostle's object was to call on Christians to show their love to one another before all: 'Before all men, have love among yourselves fervent.' Let your mutual love serve the purpose which our Lord meant it to serve. "Hereby," said he, "shall all men know you to be my disciples, if ye have love one to another." [3] Be not ashamed of one another, especially when involved in suffering for Christ. When that "iniquity abounds," let not your love among yourselves wax cold. Let not these waters quench it, let not these floods drown it.[4] Let it be so fervent that even the heathen may be constrained to say, "Behold how these Christians love one another!" We are rather disposed to consider the words as intended to mark the very great importance of this fervent love among themselves, as that without which the great purpose of Christianity could not be gained, either in the individual or in the society, either in the pale of the Christian church or beyond it; for it is love that "edifies" both the Christian and the christian church. He who has love proves that he has faith, for "faith works by love;" and he who has love is sure to have holiness, for "love is the fulfilling of the law." He who loves his brother can do no harm to his brother, he must do him all the good in his power.[5]

Paul's estimate of the comparative value of love, was not lower than that of his brother apostle; and his eulogium is the best commentary on the words, "have charity above all things." "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: for whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away: for we know in part, and prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall vanish away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I

[1] Rom. xii. 10. [2] Πρὸ πάντων. [3] John xiii. 35.
[4] Matt. xxiv. 12. [5] 1 Cor. viii. 1. Gal. v. 6. Rom. xiii. 10.

know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."[1] If charity be all, and do all, this, surely it is not wonderful that Paul should enjoin Christians "above all," or in addition to all other christian graces, to "put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness;"[2] the perfect bond; and that Peter should exhort them, "above all, to have fervent charity among themselves."

§ 2.—*The duty recommended.*

Having thus attempted to unfold the meaning of the apostle's *injunction*, respecting the maintenance of brotherly love, let us now endeavor to point out the force of his *recommendation* on this subject—"Have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

I do not know if, in the book of God, there can be found a passage which has been more grossly and dangerously interpreted than this. Though certainly not among those passages which are "hard to be understood," yet by the crafty and self-interested, "the unlearned and unstable," it has been "wrested," it is to be feared, "to their own" and other men's "destruction." Charity has been interpreted as equivalent to almsgiving, the devoting sums of money to benevolent, and what were termed pious, purposes; and has been represented as efficacious in covering a multitude of the donor's sins from the eye of the Supreme Judge, on the day when he will finally fix the eternal states of men, securing acquittal where otherwise there must have been condemnation; or charity has been identified with a disposition the reverse of censorious; and this passage, along with the words of our Lord, "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again;"[3] interpreted by the sound rather than the sense, has been employed to excite false hopes in the minds of worldly, unbelieving, impenitent men, as if their lenient judgments of their fellow-sinners, whose conduct deserved censure, would plead, and plead successfully, for a lenient sentence to themselves, "in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

What a fearful proof of the stupidity and wickedness of fallen man, that, amid the clear light of revelation, such misrepresentations should be made and credited! Surely, both the teacher and the taught have given themselves up to strong delusions, before they could make or believe such lies as these. What degrading views of the Divine character, and of the Divine law, must those men have, who think that pardon and ultimate freedom from the penal effects of sin, can be secured by anything man can do, much more can be bought with money: or that God will reward what is ordinarily a false judgment on man's part, by another false judgment on His part! Even charity in the true sense of the word, and all its blessed fruits, cannot thus cover sin, cannot obtain the pardon of sin; if for no other reason, for this, that they cannot be the procuring cause of that of which they themselves are the results. The free grace of God exercised in

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. [2] Col. iii. 14. [3] Matt. vii. 1, 2.

harmony with justice, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, to the believing sinner, can alone cover sin in the sense of forgiveness. The love of God is the sole moving cause; the atonement of the Son the sole meritorious cause; the faith of the gospel, produced by the Holy Spirit, the sole instrumental cause of forgiveness.

Setting aside this monstrous perversion of Scripture, which scarcely deserves even the passing notice we have taken of it, let us inquire what the apostle does mean, when he says, that "charity shall cover the multitude of sins;" and endeavor to show how what he means in these words, is fitted to operate as a motive to Christians to "have fervent charity among themselves."

It is right to state, that the apostle's assertion is not, that "love shall cover," or, as it is in the margin, "will cover," but "love covers," not *the* multitude, but "*a* multitude of sins." "Love covereth a multitude of sins." But whose love is it that covers sins? and whose sins are they which love covers? and what is it that love does in reference to sin when it covers it?

Some would interpret "charity," of the love of God or of Christ: and, "a multitude of sins," of all the violations of the Divine law by those Christians who are exhorted to have fervent love among themselves. 'God has loved you; his love has led him to forgive you. "He has forgiven the iniquity of his people; he has covered all their sins." Christ hath loved you, and has shed his blood in order that your sins might be forgiven in consistency with justice, in glorious illustration of justice. He has covered your sins with his righteousness; He having been made sin for you, you being made the righteousness of God in him. "Brethren, if God," if Christ, have "so loved you," surely "ye should love one another." This love to you all was fervent love. Should not your love to one another be fervent too? Should not you who have been forgiven, forgive; should you not especially forbear with and forgive your brethren, as God and Christ have forborne and forgiven both you and them?'

This, in itself, is most important truth, and these are the strongest of all motives to mutual christian love; yet I think every person must feel, on looking at the passage, that this sense is rather dragged into it than drawn out of it; and it is plain, from the original text,[1] that the love in the second clause is the same as the love in the first clause. "Have fervent love among yourselves; for *love—the* love—*this* love —covereth a multitude of sins." It is, then, the love, the fervent love of the brethren, that covers a multitude of sins, whatever and whosesoever these sins may be, and whatever may be meant by covering them.

The words, "love covereth a multitude of sins," are a quotation from the Old Testament; and it is very possible, that, by looking at them in their original connection, we may find some assistance in apprehending more distinctly both their meaning and reference here. They are to be found in Prov. x. 12, "Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins;" that is, a man under the influence of hatred, where there is no offence, where no sin against him creates it, "stirs up strife," he provokes, he magnifies, he multiplies offences. He, as

[1] Εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀγάπην ἐκτενῆ ἔχοντες, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη. κ. τ. λ.

it were, invites attack, and he commonly does not invite it in vain; but on the other hand, love, that is the man under the influence of benignant principle, "covers all sins;" puts down all strifes and offences, treats them as if they were not, makes them as if they never had been. I think it must be very plain to all, that the sins here referred to are offences committed by one brother against another; and that the assertion of the apostle is, that a brother, under the influence of that fervent charity which he has been enjoining, will cover these offences, even though there should be many of them; will, so far as the peace and edification of the brotherhood, whether as individuals or a body, are concerned, really make them as if they had never existed.

If Christians were as much under the influence of love as they ought to be, sins against each other, "offences," would not exist; for "love doth no ill to his neighbor:" in other words, the man entirely under the influence of love can do no injury to his neighbor. His person, his property, his reputation, his feelings, all his interests, are perfectly safe. The whole law, in reference to a christian brother, is summed up in love. "We owe no man anything, but to love one another."[1] If that debt is discharged, our duty is done. Were Christians habitually acting under the power of fervent charity, there would be no sins, no offences to cover. But such a state of things has never yet existed. We have no reason to think it ever will exist in this world. "Offences," says the Master, "must come;" and, if they are not met in the spirit of love, they will grow and multiply. The spark will become a flame, and the flame a conflagration.

But "love covereth sins." Fervent charity prevents a man from giving any occasion for offence. There is always a want of love in the offending brother; the offence proves this; but had there been more love in the offended brother, and had that love been more plainly manifested, the offence might never have existed. Had there been more christian, that is, more affectionate, behavior on the part of him who is offended, there might have been less, there might have been no, unchristian conduct on the part of the offender. Fervent love prevents anything like a handle being given for the unkindly feelings of others to take hold of. A christianly benignant disposition naturally leads a man to give his christian brethren credit for the same temper which animates himself; and consequently prevents him from being on the look-out for offences. He is unwilling to think that a christian brother means to injure him, for he has no disposition to injure any brother; and he will gladly admit any reasonable account of a piece of conduct which may wear any unkindly aspect, rather than have recourse to this supposition. This temper makes him overlook much which a man of a less benignant disposition would account offence.

And when offence does present itself in a form so distinctly defined that there is no mistaking it; under the power of fervent love he covers it, inasmuch as he gives no unnecessary publicity to it.

[1] Rom. xiii. 8. Ὀφείλετε is considered by some interpreters as indicative, not imperative, here. This exegesis seems better to suit the apostle's current of thought than the more usual one.

He does not conceal from the offending brother that he is aware of what he has done, and that he is sensible of the true character of his conduct. No; as no brother can give another just offence, without, in the estimation of that brother, having violated the law of their common Lord, charity, however fervent, does not blind him either to the reality or the magnitude of the fault. Were he deficient in charity, he might be silent to him, while eloquent to others, respecting the offence. He might cherish hatred to the offender in his heart, bear a grudge against him, and meditate vengeance. But he who loves his neighbor as himself, will not so hate his offending brother in his heart; he will not suffer sin on him, he will surely rebuke him. But he will *cover* the sin by, as far as lies in his power, concealing it, till he has used every practicable method to have it covered by hearty forgiveness or penitent acknowledgment; and if he be obliged to discover the offence in the first sense, it is only so far as is necessary, in order to having it covered in the second and more important sense.

The offended brother, the man sinned against, if he act under the influence of fervent love, follows the wise advice of the apocryphal sage: "Admonish thy friend; it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it not again. Admonish thy friend; it may be that he hath not said it; and if he have that he speak it not again. Admonish a friend; for many a time it is a slander, and believe not every tale. There is one that slippeth in his speech, but not from the heart; and who is he who hath not offended with his tongue?"[1] He obeys the law of the Master in heaven. If his brother trespass against him, he goes and tells him his fault by himself alone; and if he hear him, then the fault which he has never divulged, has been covered; so far as he is concerned, both concealed and forgiven. It is as if it had not been. But if the offending brother will not hear him, he takes with him one or two more of the brethren, that at the mouth of two or three witnesses everything may be established. If he hear them, then, too, the sin is covered. It is dismissed from his mind, and from the minds of those who were necessarily informed of it, and they regard their brother as before he had offended. But if he neglect to hear them, the sin, which in the sense of concealment can be covered no longer, must be told to the assembly of the elders or of the brethren; and if the offending brother hear them, and make due acknowledgment, even then love covers the sin, and receives with cordiality the offending brother. But if he obstinately persist in opposition to the mind of the assembly, then the offence is covered by the offender being removed from the society; his conduct being henceforward viewed as that of a man not connected with the brotherhood—"a heathen man and a publican;" and therefore not likely to be a cause of contention in the church, nor a scandal or stumbling-block to the world.[2]

Love, where it is fervent, will operate in this way, not only in one instance, but in many instances; not only in the case of one offending brother, but of every offending brother; and not in the case only of one or a few offences, but in the case of many offences, even from the same brother. The course prescribed by our Lord in his law, is just the course which the love produced in the heart by his Spirit, by

[1] Ecclus. xix. 13. [2] Matt. xviii. 15, 17.

means of his truth, naturally suggests. "It is impossible," says the Master, "but that offences should come. Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." "How oft shall my brother," said Peter, with characteristic forwardness, "sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven."[1] So long as you and he stand in the relation of brothers, love must be ready to cover his sins, however numerous. Such seems to me the meaning of the apostles's statement: "Charity," that is, such fervent charity as he had enjoined in the preceding clause, "covers a multitude of sins."

A very few words will suffice for showing the force which this statement has as a motive to the duty which the apostle has enjoined. "Have fervent charity among yourselves, *for* charity covereth a multitude of sins." "Offences must needs come." Brethren will sin against brethren. If these sins are not covered, what is the consequence likely to be? "The beginning of strife is like the letting out of waters." Contentions will be extended and perpetuated. There will be schisms in the body. Individual edification will be materially interfered with. The Spirit of Love will be grieved. The Holy Dove will be driven away. The church will become impure, schismatical, utterly unfit for answering her great purpose, to exhibit and to extend the religion of love. Biting and devouring each other, Christians will be consumed of each other. Roots of bitterness will spring up and flourish, and the result will be trouble and defilement. There will be envying and strife, confusion and every evil work. Plausibility will be given to the objections of infidels, and men will be deterred from connecting themselves with so suicidal a society, as in this case the church will prove itself.

This must be the result if sins are not covered, and sins can only be covered by charity, by fervent charity; and though these sins are many (the more the pity that it should be so), if there is so much fervent charity among the brethren as to cover them, what is the result? The excellence of christian truth, the power of Divine grace, are just so much the more illustriously displayed in triumphing over the unruly passions and the worldly interests of men. The disjointed, yet sound members, re-set by the skilful tender hand of enlightened charity, become more firmly united and stronger than ever; and incurably diseased portions of the body, which, if retained in it, would have eaten as does a canker, and diffused languor and weakness through the whole body, are, by the same wise spiritual surgery, amputated; so that, under the influence of truthful love, Christians "grow up to him in all things who is the head;" and "the whole body being joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in every part, maketh increase to the edifying of itself in love." The brethren live in peace, and the God of peace manifests his gracious presence in the midst of them. "The churches rest, and are edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord,

[1] Matt. xviii. 7, 21, 22. Luke xvii. 3, 4.

and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, are multiplied." The church becomes pure, and united, and strong, and beautiful in her holy union; and, free from internal quarrels and divisions, prosecutes with ardor and success, her holy warfare with the enemies of her Lord and King, while angels look on with delight, and devils with terror.

This would be the effect, were there fervent charity enough among the brethren to cover all sins. Love can do this—ay! love should do this. Nothing but love can do it; no knowledge, no faith, no power of intellect, no energy of exertion, no labors, no sufferings, can effect this without love. Is it wonderful, then, when love can cover a multitude of sins, all sins, and when nothing else can do so, and when by doing so, such evils would be avoided, and such glorious results secured, that the apostle should use such urgency of persuasion, and call on Christians "above all things to have fervent charity," or to have charity fervent, "among themselves?"

I shut up this part of the discourse by quoting a few passages of Scripture, in which the cultivation of brotherly, christian love, is pressed on Christians, praying that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of love, would write them on our hearts, and put them in our inward parts. "A new commandment," says the Master, "a new commandment I have given unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "Be kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love," says one of his holy apostles, "with all lowliness of mind, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness"—that is, kindness—"meekness. Live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us. Put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." "Ye are taught by God to love one another." "The end of the commandment is charity." "Follow after love, patience, meekness." "Let brotherly love continue." "The wisdom that cometh from above," says another apostle, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." "Seeing ye have purified yourselves," says a third apostle, "in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethen, see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently. Be of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren." "He," says a fourth, who had a very large measure of the Spirit of his Master, "he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. Whosoever loveth not his brother is not of God. We know

that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. This is his commandment, That we believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he who loveth not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we of him, That he who loveth God love his neighbor also." That we should love one another,—this is the commandment which we have received from the beginning, that we should walk in it.[1]

My beloved brethren, "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." We have much cause to be thankful for that measure of the spirit of love which our Father has been pleased to shed on us as a congregation, through Christ Jesus, and for that peace which is springing out of it. Let us carefully guard against whatever may cool our love or break our harmony. Let us all seek to be kept near Christ, that we may be kept near each other; and let us pray that our love to our Lord, to one another, to all the saints, to all men, "may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment," and may become more and more effectual in producing personal and mutual edification, and in promoting the prosperity and extension of the kingdom which is not of this world, making us to be of one mind —his mind; of one heart—his heart; a mind all light, a heart all love.

II.—THE MANIFESTATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the apostle's injunction and recommendation of the manifestation of christian brotherly love. The fervent love which they were to cherish among themselves was to be manifested in performing kind offices to each other as men, and in promoting the spiritual interests of each other as Christians. They were to employ their worldly property in the first of these manifestations of brotherly love, and their spiritual gifts in the second; and the grand motive influencing them in both was to be that they were stewards, and ought to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God; and "that God in all things might be glorified through Jesus Christ." Let us attend, then, in succession to these two enjoined manifestations of christian brotherly love, and to the powerful motives by which both are enforced. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

[1] John xiii. 34, 35. Rom. xii. 10. Eph. iv. 3. Gal. v. 22, 25. Eph. iv. 30–32; v. 1, 2. Col. iii. 12. 1 Thess. iv. 9. 1 Tim. i. 5; vi. 11. Heb. xiii. 1. James iii. 17. 1 Pet. i. 22; iii. 8. 1 John ii. 9, 11; iii. 14–16, 23; iv. 7, 11, 20, 21. 2 John 5.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

§ 1.—*Christians are to manifest brotherly love, by employing their property for each other's good as men, as in ungrudging hospitality.*

We observe, then, in the first place, that Christians are to manifest the fervent love which they have among themselves, by employing their worldly property in performing kind offices to each other as men. Of these kind offices we have a specimen in the ungrudging hospitality which is here enjoined, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

The habit of inviting, in considerable numbers, to our houses and tables, neighbors, acquaintances, and friends, in rank equal or superior to ourselves, and giving them a sumptuous entertainment, is what in our times generally passes by the name of hospitality. Where God's good creatures are not abused, which they often are, as stimulants and gratifications to intemperate appetite, and when these entertainments are not so expensive or so frequent as to waste an undue proportion of our substance and time, and to interfere with the right discharge of the duties of family instruction and devotion, there is nothing wrong in them. I believe we may go a little further and say, that in this case they are fitted to serve a good purpose in keeping up friendly intercourse among relations and friends.

But they are put out of their place altogether, when they are considered as a substitute for the christian duty of hospitality. It is plain that our Lord did not condemn such meetings, for we find him not unfrequently present at them; but he obviously looked on them as capable of being better managed, and turned to more useful purposes, than they commonly were among the Jews in his time. "When thou makest a dinner or a supper," said our Lord to one of the chief pharisees who had invited him to his table, "call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." [1]

We are certainly not to consider these words of our Lord as a prohibition of convivial intercourse among equals, the entertaining on proper occasions, in a suitable manner, of our wealthy neighbors, friends, and relatives; but we are to understand that, in doing so, we are rather complying with an innocent and useful social usage than performing an important christian duty; and that the proportion of our property devoted to feeding the poor, should very much exceed that expended in feasting the rich. What are termed hospitable en-

[1] Luke xiv. 12–14.

tertainments are very generally manifestations of vanity and pride on the part of those who give them. In a very limited degree are they the real expression of even a very low form of benevolent regard to those to whom they are given. The expense at which they are made is not incurred from love to God, regard to his authority, or a wish to promote his glory. Reward from him is altogether out of the question; and the applause, or, what is in some instances more relished still, the envy, of others, and a similar banquet in return, are the appropriate and the wished-for recompense. It is deeply to be regretted that so many professors of Christianity are in this respect unduly conformed to the world, and lavish on these thankless and profitless entertainments sums which might so easily be turned to so much better account in relieving the wants, and adding to the comforts of the poor and destitute; or in promoting the glory of God, and the highest interests of mankind, by diffusing "the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins."

But the occasional entertainment of our acquaintances, whether poor or rich, however unobjectionably, and even usefully, conducted, is not the christian duty which, under the name of hospitality, is here and in so many other passages of the New Testament recommended. Hospitality is kindness to strangers, to persons not generally resident in the same place with ourselves, to persons with whom we are not on habits of intimate acquaintanceship; and this kindness is manifested by bringing them to our houses, and furnishing them with suitable entertainment there.

We have this duty strikingly illustrated in the case of Abraham and of Lot, when they "entertained angels unawares." Nothing can be more beautifully simple than the inspired narrative: "And Abraham sat in the door of his tent in Mamre, in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and, when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." And when two of these illustrious strangers entered Sodom, "Lot, sitting in the gate, rose up to meet them; and bowed himself with his face toward the ground: and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And when they said, Nay, but we will abide in the street all night, he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and

did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat."[1] This was ancient hospitality.

In the same spirit we find Jethro saying to his daughters, in reference to the stranger who had assisted them in watering their flocks, "And where is he? why is it that ye left the man? call him that he may eat bread."[2]

An instance of this virtue, not less interesting, is to be found in the case of the aged "working man" of Gibeah: "Behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even. And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? And he said unto him, We are passing from Bethlehem-Judah toward the side of Mount Ephraim; from thence am I; and I went to Bethlehem, but I am now going to the house of the Lord; and there is no man that receiveth me into his house. Yet is there both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and thine handmaid, and for the young man with thy servant; there is no want of anything. And the old man said, Peace be with thee: howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street. So he brought him into the house, and gave provender to the asses; and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink."[3]

Kindness to strangers was not only included in the second great command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," but was the subject of express legislation in the Mosaic code. "If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord thy God. The Levite, because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied," at the feast made on the tithe of the increase being set apart, at the end of every third year, "that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works of thine hand which thou doest."

In the New Testament, a disposition to entertain strangers is represented as a necessary qualification of a christian bishop. He must be "given to hospitality," "a lover of hospitality;" and it is mentioned as one of the characteristics of "the widow indeed," that she has "lodged strangers, and washed the saints' feet." And Christians generally are expected to be "given to hospitality," and not to be "forgetful to entertain strangers."[5]

Nor is the duty only enjoined in the New Testament; it is also exemplified. When Lydia was baptized, "she besought Paul and his companions," strangers in Philippi, "saying, If ye have judged me faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there; and she constrained them." Mnason from Cyprus, "the old disciple," entertained Paul and his associates in Jerusalem. Gaius, at Corinth, was so remarkable for his hospitality, that Paul calls him his host and the

[1] Gen. xviii. 1–8; xix. 1–3. [2] Exod. ii. 18–20. [3] Judges xix. 16–21.
[4] Exod. xxii. 21; xxiii. 9. Lev. xix. 33.
[5] 1 Tim. iii. 2. Tit. i. 8. 1 Tim. v. 10. Rom. xii. 13.

host of the whole church; and Philemon refreshed the bowels of the saints, and prepared Paul a lodging.[1]

There can be no doubt that Christians are bound to exercise kindness to strangers generally, though they should not belong to the christian society. In every way in their power, they ought to "do good to all men, as they have opportunity;" but it is quite plain that the injunction before us has an especial reference to the "household of faith," "Use hospitality *among yourselves.*" When Christians in the course of their ordinary business went from home, as the means for accommodating strangers were not at all so abundant as in modern times, their brethren in the countries or cities they visited were expected to minister to their wants and convenience. "I commend unto you Phebe, our sister," says the apostle to the church at Rome, not only "that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints," that is, admit her to fellowship with you in the ordinances of religion, but also "that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you; for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also;"[2] that is, be hospitable to her who has been hospitable to me, and many others.

Christians driven from their homes by persecution, were those who had the strongest claims on the hospitality of their more favored brethren; and next to, or it may be equal to, their claim, was that of those who had devoted their lives to the service of Christ among the heathen. It is in reference to them that the Apostle John speaks to the beloved Gaius: "Beloved, thou doest faithfully," or thou actest the part of a believer, "whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church; whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth."[3]

The abundant accommodation which the habits of modern times have secured for strangers sojourning for a season from home, and the extent to which movement from place to place now prevails, makes hospitality, in the same sense and in the same measure as in the primitive times, unnecessary, and indeed impracticable. But christian morality in its spirit is for all countries and for all ages. It is like its Author, unchanged and unchangeable. It is a proof that love has waxed cold, when Christians are not disposed to pay kind attention to their brethren from other places, who have no claim on their attention but that they are "one with them in Christ."

The prevalence of such an inhospitable spirit is, in more ways than one, a proof that the purity of christian communion in these last days has declined from its primitive standard; and it has often seemed to me a token that things are not as they should be among us, when Christians from foreign lands, agents of our christianly benevolent institutions, prosecuting their objects, and office-bearers of the various christian churches visiting our large cities on business connected with the maintenance and extension of the kingdom of Christ, in so many instances, at an expense they can often ill afford, have to take up their

[1] Acts xvi. 14, 15; xxi. 16. Rom. xvi. 23. Philemon 7, 22. [2] Rom. xvi. 1, 2.
[3] 3 John 5-8. See note A.

abodes, for a few days it may be, or a few weeks, in houses of public accommodation, instead of finding an Abraham, a Lot, a Jethro, an old man of Gibeah, a Lydia, a Gaius, or a Mnason, to entertain them; and have sometimes cause to complain, that but for meeting some of the leading men in public, in the prosecution of their objects, they leave those cities as little acquainted with their christian inhabitants as when they entered them.

Surely Christians should not be behind the Jews in respect to religious hospitality. At the great national Jewish festivals, hospitality was liberally practised so long as national identity existed. On these occasions, no inhabitant of Jerusalem considered his house his own. Every house swarmed with strangers, though even this unbounded hospitality could not find accommodation in the houses for all who stood in need of it, and a large proportion of visitors had to be content with such shelter as tents could afford.

The neglected christian strangers are not the only, are not the principal, sufferers. In receiving *them* we might have "received angels unawares;" and we should not forget who it is who will one day say, "I was a stranger, and ye took *me* in. I was a stranger, and ye took *me* not in;" and who, when the questions shall be put, When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee not in? shall answer, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it to me: Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me."[1]

Using hospitality is but one out of many ways in which brotherly kindness is to be manifested in employing worldly substance in performing offices of kindness to our fellow-Christians. The Christian, according to his ability, must be "eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the afflicted poor." The christian law of love confirms the benignant statutes of the Mosaic code: "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner. Ye shall not rule over one another with rigor. If there be among you a poor man, one of thy brethren, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him. Beware lest thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him naught, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee; thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest to him. Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and thy needy, in thy land." "If a brother have this world's goods, and see his brother in need," he must not "shut up his bowels of compassion from him;" he must not be contented with saying, Be ye clothed, be ye fed; he must "love not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth;" he must "give him the things that are needful for the body;" and though community of property is by no means required by the christian law, though there is no sufficient reason for thinking that it prevailed as a matter of necessity or obligation, even in the primitive times;[2] yet where the spirit of primitive

[1] Matt. xxv. 35–46.

[2] Vide Mosheimii "Commentatio" "de vera natura Communionis Bonorum in Ecclesia Hierosolymitana." Diss. ad Hist. Ecclesiast. Pertin. Vol. ii. p. 14, &c.

Christianity prevails, wherever "the disciples are of one mind and of one heart," they will, in effect, have all things common, doing good to one another, and to all men, as they have opportunity, and valuing worldly property chiefly as affording the means of glorifying God, and promoting the happiness of our fellow-men, and, still more, our fellow-Christians.

The particular form and measure of hospitality, and other kindred offices of kindness, must depend on circumstances. It must be "as God has prospered us," and "as we have opportunity." It is well observed by Leighton, that "the great straitening of hands in these things is more from the straitness of hearts than of means. A large heart with a little estate will do much with cheerfulness and little noise; while hearts glued to the poor riches they possess, or rather are possessed by, can scarce part with anything till they be pulled from all."

In whatever measure these deeds of kindness are done, it is essential that they all possess the quality which the apostle requires in hospitality, that they be "without grudging." "All things" of this kind are to be done "without murmurings." "Every man, according as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give," so let him act; "for God loveth a cheerful giver,"[1] a cheerful doer. Good offices reluctantly rendered lose more than half their value. It is only when they really embody love that they are acceptable to God; and it is only in the degree in which they appear to embody love, that they are gratifying to their objects. So much for the first way in which Christians are to manifest brotherly love, by employing their worldly property in performing offices of kindness to one another as men.

§ 2.—*Christians are to manifest brotherly love, by employing their spiritual gifts, for promoting one another's spiritual edification.*

The second way in which they are to manifest their brotherly love, is to employ their spiritual gifts for promoting one another's spiritual interests as Christians: "As every man hath received the gift, even so let them minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth."

The word "gift"[2] here, and generally in the apostolic epistles, signifies any endowment, it may be natural, or it may be miraculous, influenced and guided by the Holy Spirit. "The grace of God"[3] is the same as "the gift," only it is descriptive of the aggregate of the gifts, and the endowment and the influence are viewed in the last case as given by God, in the first as enjoyed by man. This grace is termed "manifold,"[4] to mark the varied forms which the Divine gifts, all of them expressive of grace, kindness, take in different individuals. Speaking of the supernatural spiritual gifts, the apostle says what is true of all spiritual gifts, "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administration, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the

[1] 2 Cor. ix. 7. [2] Χάρισμα. [3] Χάριτος Θεοῦ. [4] Ποικίλης.

same God that worketh all in all; and the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." [1]

The church is viewed as a household, to the various members of which the Divine Master of the family has given various qualifications, by the exercise of which they are mutually to promote one another's improvement and happiness; and thus the improvement and happiness of the whole family is to be secured. These gifts, then, are not to be considered as conferred only or chiefly for the advantage of the individual on whom they are bestowed. They are intended for the good of the whole; and the gifted person is, in the exercise of his gift, not to act as an independent proprietor, seeking his own advantage, and doing what he wills with his own, but as a good steward, turning to the best account, according to the declared will of the great Householder, a portion of His property, which the individual intrusted with is expected to use, not only for his own good, but for the good of all his brethren.

The meaning of the passage in our version is, I apprehend, somewhat obscured by an attempt to illustrate it. You will observe, that the words, "Let him speak," and "let him do it," are in the italic character, indicating, as you are aware, that there are no corresponding words in the original; but that they are, in the estimation of the translators, necessary to bring out the sense in English; and if the tenth and eleventh verses are two distinct sentences, as they obviously supposed, some such supplement is necessary to bring any sense out of the first part of the latter of the verses; though to bring distinctly out the meaning our translators supposed to be in them, would have required a still larger supplement than that they have inserted. 'If any man speak the oracles of God, let him speak them *as* the oracles of God. If any man act the part of a minister or deacon, let him act the part of a minister, *as* of the ability which God giveth.' These are good advices, and it was only by attending to them that the gifted speakers or ministers could exercise the gift bestowed on them to the advantage of their brethren, and be good stewards of that portion of the manifold grace of God committed to their care.

I apprehend, however, that the two verses are not two sentences, but one, and that no supplement is necessary to bring out the full sense of the apostle. The words in the beginning of the eleventh verse are just an illustration, by examples, of the statement in the beginning of the tenth verse. "Speaking as the oracles of God," "ministering as of the ability which God has given," are just two of "the gifts" bestowed on individuals for the use of the church, two varieties of the "manifold grace of God," which the recipients were to employ "as good stewards." The words may be literally rendered, "According as every man has received the gift, let them minister the same to each other, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; whosoever speaks as the oracles of God, whosoever ministers as of the ability which God hath given him." One man has received the gift of speaking as the oracles of God, the faculty of being useful in teaching and exhorting; he is an inspired teacher. Another has

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 4–6.

received the gift of ministry, the faculty of being useful in the management of the affairs of the spiritual society, in preserving order, collecting and managing its funds for supporting and extending the ordinances of Christianity, and for relieving the sick, the infirm, and the poor. Whatever faculty any Christian possesses of this kind, or of any other kind, is a gift received from Christ, for the purpose of edifying his body the church, is a portion of his "manifold grace" intrusted to the individual, to be managed faithfully and wisely for the purpose for which it is bestowed.

The passage before us receives illustration from some other passages in the apostolic epistles, which, though not in every respect parallel, obviously relate to the same subject. The first of these passages is to be found in the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans: "I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having, indeed, gifts, differing according to the grace given unto us;" as in the passage before us, "having gifts according to the manifold grace of God;" and the gifts spoken of in this passage seem to be precisely the same as those specified in our text, "whether prophecy or ministry."[1] The gift of prophecy seems to be the same thing as the gift enabling a man to "speak as the oracles of God," the gift which fitted for teaching. The gift of "ministry," mentioned in both cases, is the gift, the qualification, or class of qualifications, which fit for administration; the first gift being to be exercised in "teaching and exhortation;" the second in "giving, in ruling or presiding, and in showing mercy."

The second passage I refer to as fitted to throw light on our text, is in the First Epistle of the same Apostle to the Corinthians. "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," that is, to employ for the benefit of his brethren, to use as a steward of the manifold grace of God. "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."[2] The same general division of gifts fitting for teaching, and gifts fitting for administration, may be noticed here. To the first class belong "the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues:" to the second, the gifts of "healing

[1] Rom. xii. 3–8. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 1–11.

and the discerning of spirits;" while the gifts of working miracles, and faith, which seem to mean supernatural confidence and boldness, were gifts which might be usefully employed both in teaching and in administration.

That the design of those various gifts was the mutual edification of Christians, and the general advantage of the church, is distinctly stated in what follows: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. God hath tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular;" that is, every one individually a member of that body.[1]

The third passage peculiarly fitted to illustrate the text, is in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle having exhorted the believers to endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,"—that is, just to have fervent charity among themselves, so that the multitude of sins might be covered,—goes on to state the manner in which they, being one body, were connected by having severally divers gifts fitted and intended for the advantage of the body. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors; and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."[2]

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 12–27.

[2] Eph. iv. 3–16.

Viewed in the light of these passages, there is no difficulty in perceiving what are the great principles which our text involves. They are these: that God by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, communicates to his church, in manifestation of his sovereign, undeserved, distinguishing favor, those gifts that are necessary to its prosperity as a society, and to the improvement and happiness of its individual members; that this is not done by giving to every member the same gifts, far less an equal measure of the same gifts; that the gifts are manifold or various, suited to serve different purposes, and communicated, too, in diversified measure to different individuals; that these gifts are all communicated for the purpose of being exercised; that the design of these exercises is not only, or so much, the advantage of the gifted individual as that of the body at large; and, finally, that in the exercise of his gift every person ought to consider himself as a steward who must be faithful, managing the property of another for the specific purposes for which he has been intrusted with it.

He who neglects the gift that is in him, is an unprofitable servant. He who converts it into a means of gaining selfish objects, the gratification of his own private tastes, or the purposes of interest or ambition, instead of devoting it to the edification of his brethren, is an unfaithful servant. He who, instead of cultivating and exercising his own gift, attempts to exercise a gift he has not received, and in this way to occupy a field which he is not fitted, and others are fitted, to occupy, is an unwise servant.

These observations are applicable to spiritual gifts, according to the definition already given of them, whether supernatural or not, and whether connected with official station in the church or not. The reference in the text, as well as in the parallel passages, seems to be to gifts, probably supernatural, connected with the two offices of teaching and ministry, of which all the offices in the primitive church seem to be represented as varieties; and the command is, of course, to be viewed as addressed primarily to those Christians who occupy official situations in the church.

The man who, in consequence of a gift conferred on him, and a call addressed to him, "speaks as the oracles of God," officially teaches the doctrines and laws of Christ Jesus, that man is to exercise his gift and perform the duties of his office, not in the way most fitted to gratify his own particular taste, or promote his own reputation for learning, ingenuity, and eloquence, but in the way most fitted for promoting the increase of the church in knowledge and faith, and holiness and comfort; and, if he has a peculiar gift, he is bound especially to cultivate and exercise that gift, whether it be for exposition or exhortation, for the establishment of truth or the exposure of error, for warning the unruly or comforting the afflicted. On the other hand, he who, in consequence of a gift conferred on him, and a call addressed to him, "ministers of the ability that God has given," in presiding, superintending, administering the laws of Christ's church, managing the charities of the church, performing all the offices indicated by the terms ruling, giving, showing mercy, ought to exercise his gift and perform the duties of his office, not to secure personal influence, to gratify personal vanity, or to promote personal interest, but to ad-

vance the great interests of the church as a spiritual body, and of the individuals constituting its members.

But the *principle* in the text reaches beyond the limits of official station; it is applicable to every individual member of the church. Every member has a gift; and that gift, whatever it be, is to be exercised not only for his own advantage, but for that of his brethren, as God gives him opportunity. Every Christian is to look not only at his own things, but at the things of others. Christians are to "work out each other's salvation," as well as each man his own. Indeed, there is reason to think that that is the reference of the passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, now alluded to. Brother is to teach brother. They are to "exhort one another daily;" they are to "bear one another's burdens;" they are to "look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." In the use of the gifts of the private members of a church, wisdom is necessary, as well as profitable, to direct; but without at all interfering with the peculiar duties, or intruding into the peculiar province, of official teaching and rule, there is abundant room for the exercise of the gift of each, to the common benefit of all; and there is, questionless, something wanting, something wrong, in all ecclesiastical constitutions which do not, by the regular employment of the gifts of individuals, provide for the common good of all the members of the body of Christ. "I desire none," says the devout prelate so often referred to, "to leap over the bounds of their calling, or rules of christian prudence, in their converse; yea, this were much to be blamed; but I fear, lest unwary hands, throwing on water to quench that evil, have let some of it fall by upon those sparks that should rather have been stirred and blown up."

§ 3.—*Motives to these two manifestations of christian love.*

Enough has been said in illustration of the duty of the manifestation of christian love, in the two forms prescribed in the passage before us. Let us say a word or two on the MOTIVES by which the duty is enforced.

There is a motive and a powerful one, implied in the words, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Neither the temporal goods nor the spiritual gifts of Christians are their own property. Both have been given them, and given not to serve selfish but public ends. They were talents to be traded with, not so much to enrich the individual as to enlarge and improve the Master's property. If they neglect to use them for this purpose, they are unprofitable servants, they waste their Lord's money. An active, wise, faithful, use of these gifts, is necessary, to their being good stewards. Christians holding office in the church, and, indeed, all Christians, should often remember that they must give an account of their stewardship, for they must not always be stewards; and if they do not attend to the command in the text, the account cannot be given in with joy, but with grief, which will be unprofitable to them. Whereas, if they do apply their gift, however limited, honestly to its appropriate purpose, their labor shall not be vain in the Lord. The cordial welcome and its joyful results shall be theirs: "Well done, good and faithful ser-

vant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Thinkest thou," says Archbishop Leighton, "that thy wealth, or power, or wit, is thine, to do with as thou wilt, to engross to thyself either to retain as useless or to use, to hoard and wrap up, or to lavish out; according as thy humor leads thee? No! All is given as to a steward, wisely and faithfully to lay up and lay out, not only the outward estate and common gifts of mind, but even saving grace, which seems most appropriated for thy private good, yet is not wholly for that. Even thy graces are for the good of thy brethren?"

The great motive, however, urged by the apostle for manifesting christian love is, "that in all things God may be glorified through Christ Jesus." In the christian economy "all things are of God," and all things are "by Christ Jesus." The christian church is the new creation; the work of the word and Spirit of God, as was the first creation. Every true member of it is "created anew in Christ Jesus;" and of it, still more emphatically than of the holy nation, which was its type, may it be said, "This people hath he formed for himself." They ought, then, to show forth his praise. When Christians manifest their love to one another in the way enjoined in the text, both the individual improvement of the members and the general spiritual prosperity of the church as a body, are promoted. Holiness and happiness are diffused. The wisdom, the power, the holiness, and the benignity of God, in the glorious economy of grace, of which the spiritual society, "the church," is an important element, are illustriously displayed. His authority is visibly acknowledged, his object is visibly gained, when Christians live altogether in holy love. On the other hand, when christian love is not maintained and manifested, God is dishonored. A false view is given of his character; and his holy name is blasphemed among the unbelievers, through the unworthy conduct of those calling themselves his people. The taunt is a bitter one, when Christians act a part unworthy of their character, 'See how these Christians bite and devour one another. These are the lights of the world. These are the salt of the earth. This is Christianity, and these are Christians.'

A regard to the glory of God, especially as manifested through the mediation of Christ, is the master-principle of every true Christian; and it is his prevailing desire that whether he eat or drink, or whatsoever he do, he may do all to the glory of God. No motive, then, can be conceived better adapted than this to induce Christians carefully to cultivate, habitually to manifest, brotherly love; without this God cannot be glorified, nay, he must be dishonored by them; and just in the degree in which they attend to these duties, do they answer the design of their high and holy vocation; the "showing forth the praises of him who hath called them from darkness to light;" the being "to the praise of the glory of him who hath made them accepted in the beloved," whose they are, whom they are bound to serve; "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things."

The apostle concludes his exhortation and enforcement of the maintenance and manifestation of brotherly love, by a solemn doxology: "To whom be praise and dominion forever and ever." If we look

merely at the words, it may be doubted, whether this ascription of Divine honors has a reference to God the Father or to Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt, that there are similar ascriptions of Divine honors to our Lord Jesus in other parts of the New Testament; and that, as He and the Father are one, it is most meet "that all should honor the Son as they honor the Father." At the same time, though Jesus Christ be the nearest antecedent, God the Father is the subject of the preceding statement; and an ascription of Divine praise and dominion to HIM seems most natural to rise out of that statement. It is as if the apostle had said—Seek, by the maintenance and manifestation of brotherly love, to glorify God; for he is worthy of all glory. Praise and dominion are his proper due.

"It is," says Leighton, "most reasonable, his due as God the Author of all, not only of all supervenient good, but even of being itself; seeing that all is from him, that all be for him. 'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever.' As it is most just, so it is most sweet, to aim at this, that God be glorified. It is the only worthy design that fills the heart with heavenliness, and with a heavenly calmness; and sets it above the clouds and storms of those passions that disquiet low, self-seeking minds. He is a miserable unsettled wretch who cleaves to himself and forgets God; is perplexed about his credit, and gain, and base ends, which are often broke; and when he attains them, yet they and he shortly perish together. When his estate, or designs, or any comforts fail, how can he look to him whom he looked so little at before? May not the Lord say, 'Go to the gods whom thou hast served, and let them deliver and comfort thee?' Seek comfort from thyself as thou didst all for thyself. But he that hath resigned himself, and is all for God, may confidently say, 'The Lord is my portion.' This is the Christian's aim, to have nothing in himself, nor in anything but in this tenure; all for the glory of my God, my estate, family, abilities, my whole self, all I have and am. And as the love of God grows in the heart this purpose grows; the higher the flame rises the purer it is; the eye is daily more upon it; it is oftener in the mind in all actions than before. In common things, the very works of our callings, our very refreshments, to eat, and drink, and sleep, are all for this end, and with a particular aim at it as much as may be. Even the thought of it is often renewed throughout the day, and at times generally applied to all our ways and employments. It is that elixir which turns all into gold; thy ordinary works into sacrifices, 'with which God is well pleased.'"

The introduction of this doxology in the midst of his exhortation is a beautiful exemplification of the apostle's piety. We have not a few instances of the same kind in the epistolary writings of his "beloved brother Paul." It were a pleasing proof that we had "obtained like precious faith" with the apostles, and been baptized into the Spirit which was shed forth on them so abundantly, were there in our hearts a fountain of affectionate esteem, grateful admiration, adoring awe of the Divine holiness, benignity, and majesty, always ready to gush forth in a stream of praise; "a well of living water, springing up to eternal life." It were indeed, as the devout Archbishop says, "a high and blessed condition to be in all estates in some willing readiness to bear

a part in this song, to acknowledge the greatness and goodness of our God, and to wish him glory in all. What are the angels doing? This is their business, without interruption, without weariness, without end. And, seeing we hope to partake with them, we should even now, though in a lower key, and not so tunably neither, yet as we may, begin it; and upon all occasions our hearts should often be following in this sweet note or offering at it, 'To Him be glory and dominion forever.'"

NOTE A. p. 618.

"The care of providing for the support and maintenance of strangers, of the poor, the sick, the old, of widows and orphans, and of those in prison on account of their faith, devolved on the whole church. This was one of the main purposes for which the collection of voluntary contributions, in the assemblies convened for public worship, was instituted; and the charity of individuals, moreover, led them to emulate each other in the same good work. In particular, it was considered as belonging to the office of the christian matron to provide for the poor, for the brethren languishing in prison, and to show hospitality to strangers. The hindrance occasioned to this kind of christian activity, is reckoned by Tertullian among the disadvantages of a mixed marriage. 'What heathen,' says he, 'will suffer his wife to go about from one street to another, to the houses of strangers, to the meanest hovels indeed, for the purpose of visiting the brethren? What heathen will allow her to steal away into the dungeon to kiss the chain of the martyr? If a brother arrive from abroad, what reception will he meet in the house of *the stranger?* If an alms is to be bestowed, storehouse and cellar are shut fast.' On the other hand, he counts it among the felicities of a marriage contracted between Christians, that the wife is at liberty to visit the sick and relieve the needy, and is never straitened or perplexed in the bestowment of her charities. Nor did the active brotherly love of each community confine itself to what transpired in its own immediate circle, but extended itself also to the wants of the christian communities in distant lands. On urgent occasions of this kind, the bishops made arrangements for special collections. They appointed fasts; so that what was saved, even by the poorest of the flock, from their daily food, might help to supply the common wants."
—TERTULL. ad uxorem, ii. 1, 8; de jejunio, c. xii.—NEANDER. Gen. Hist. vol. i. pp. 347, 8.

DISCOURSE XX.

DIRECTORY TO CHRISTIANS SUFFERING FOR THEIR RELIGION.

1 Pet. iv. 12–19.—Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

From many passages in this epistle, it is obvious that they to whom it was addressed were in adverse circumstances. They had already been exposed to suffering in a variety of forms, in consequence of their profession of the faith of Christ. "They were in heaviness, through manifold temptations; and it is more than once not obscurely intimated, that the trials in which they had been involved were but the forerunners of more severe persecutions, to which, ere long, they might expect to be subjected. It was with them a dark and cloudy day, and their sky did not appear to be clearing. The evils they had experienced seemed to be but the prelusive drops of an approaching tempest. The paragraph which is to form the subject of our discourse at this time, contains an inspired directory for those persecuted Christians, amid the increasing difficulties of their situation. The injunctions contained in this inspired directory seem all reducible to the four following: 'Be not astonished at your sufferings;' 'Be not depressed by your sufferings;' 'Be not ashamed of your sufferings;' and, 'persevering in well-doing, commit the keeping of your souls to God, under your sufferings.' Let us shortly attend to these four injunctions in their order, as explained and enforced by the apostle.

I.—BE NOT ASTONISHED AT YOUR SUFFERINGS.

The first direction given by the apostle to his suffering brethren is, 'Be not astonished at your sufferings.' "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened to you."

The course of suffering on which these Christians had entered, is figuratively described as a fire or burning, intended to try them. The allusion is to the intense heat of the furnace of the refiner, by which he tests the genuineness, and increases the purity, of the precious metals. The figurative representation is obviously designed to indicate, at once the great severity and the important purposes of the afflictions on which these Christians might reckon with certainty as awaiting them.

These afflictions were to be severe. They are compared, not to the heat of the sun, or of an ordinary fire, but to the concentrated heat of the refiner's furnace; and we know, from authentic history respecting the persecutions to which the primitive Christians were exposed, that this figure does not at all outrun the reality. Calumnious misrepresentation and spoiling of goods, stripes and imprisonments, weariness and painfulness, hunger and thirst, watchings and fastings, cold and nakedness, were to them common trials. The apostle's description of the Maccabean martyrs is equally applicable to the primitive Christians. "Some of them were tortured" in every form which malignant ingenuity could devise, "others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."[1] Well did such suffering deserve to be termed, the burning, "the fiery trial."[2]

The figure is equally significant if we consider it as referring to the design of these sufferings. In this respect, too, they resembled the fire of the refiner's furnace. The design of its intense heat is to test and to purify the precious metals subjected to it. The design of their sufferings is to test the genuineness of profession and the power of principle; and, by separating the precious from the vile, to improve the character, both of the christian society and of the christian individuals of which it is composed.

It was not at all unnatural that the primitive Christians, when exposed to such sufferings, should not only feel them to be very painful, but reckon them to be very wonderful; that they should think 'it strange concerning the burning among them, as if some strange thing had happened to them.' Were not they "the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus;" the "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty?"[3] Did he not love them? Could he not protect them? Had he not wisdom enough to confound all the plans, power enough to restrain and frustrate all the efforts, of their enemies? Had he not promised to preserve them from all evil, and to bestow on them every blessing? Was it not strange, in these circumstances, that they should be exposed to suffering at all? doubly strange that they should be exposed to suffering for avowing the relation and performing their duty to him? strangest of all, that they should be exposed to *such* suffering when following such a course?

And if these sufferings seemed strange as coming from God, they

[1] Heb. xi. 36–38. [2] Πύρωσις. [3] Gal. iii. 26. 2 Cor. vi. 18.

must also have appeared strange as coming from men. They were no disturbers of the public peace, no invaders of private rights. They were "blameless and harmless, the children of God without rebuke;" [1] rendering to all their due, nay, doing good to all as they had opportunity. Was it not strange that they should be the objects of the contempt and dislike of their fellow-citizens, and be treated by their rulers as if they had been egregious malefactors?

Yet, notwithstanding all this, there was abundant reason why the primitive Christians should not think their persecutions strange, however severe. No strange thing, indeed, happened to them. The spirit of Christianity is so directly opposed to the spirit of the world, that the wonder is, not that there has been so much persecution, but that there has not been more. But for the restraints of God's providence on the world, and on him who is its prince and god, Christianity and Christians had long ago been exterminated. "If they were of the world, the world would love its own; but because they were not of the world, even as He who called them was not of the world, therefore the world hated them as it hated him." [2] Without an entire change in the spiritual character of the world, it could not have been otherwise. It would have been strange indeed if it had not hated them. No! "It is not strange that the malignant world should hate holiness, hate the light, hate the very shadow of it: the more the children of God walk like their Father and their home, the more unlike must they of necessity become to the world about them, and therefore become the very marks of their enmities and malice." "There is in the life of a Christian a convincing light, that shows the depravity of the works of darkness, and a piercing heat that scorches the ungodly, which stirs and troubles their consciences. This they cannot endure, and hence rises in them a contrary fire of wicked hatred; and hence the trials, the fiery trials, of the godly." [3]

Nor is this the only reason why Christians should not account sufferings for the cause of Christ, however severe, "strange." They are not only natural, so far as a wicked world is concerned, but they are necessary for them. "It is needful," as the apostle observes above; "it is needful that ye for a season be in heaviness through manifold temptation." Such seasons of persecution are necessary to the church as a body. During a period of comparative worldly prosperity, multitudes of worldly men find their way into the communion of the church; and, just in the degree in which they have influence in it, unfit it for its great purposes both to those within its pale and those without it. A period of uninterrupted external prosperity, if it were not attended with such an effusion of Divine influence as the world has never yet witnessed, would soon lead to such secularization of the church as would destroy the distinction of the church from the world; not by converting the world, but by perverting the church; not by making the world christian, but by making the church worldly. It is needful that the great husbandman take the fan in his hand that he may purge his floor, driving off the chaff, and bringing close together the good grain. "When tribulation for the world's sake

[1] Phil. ii. 15. [2] John xv. 18. [3] Leighton.

ariseth, those who have no root in themselves are offended," stumbled; they "go away, and walk no more with Jesus" and his persecuted followers; and it is a good riddance; while, on the other hand, tribulation in the cause of those who "have root in themselves," "works patience," endurance. It produces not apostasy, but perseverance.[1] For, as persecution purifies the church, so it improves her true members. They are called by it to a more vigorous exercise of all the principles of the new life; and it is a general law, that exercise invigorates. It is at once an indication of health, and a means of improving it. The Christian in the day of trial quits himself like a man, and becomes strong. His faith, his hope, his patience, his zeal, his humility, are increased exceedingly. "The trial of faith," by these afflictions, "is more precious than the trial of gold." Gold can never be so purified as to become incorruptible; but faith, strengthened by trial, becomes invincible, and will "be found to praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Suffering for Christ, in some form and degree or other, seems to be essential to the formation of the Christian character; and that character has, usually, reached nearest to perfection in those who have had the largest share of that kind of trial.

Another reason why Christians should not think "the fiery trial" a strange thing, is, that their Lord met with severe sufferings, "the contradiction of sinners against himself," and that all their brethren who had gone before them have also been severely afflicted. Should they think it strange to be led to heaven in the same road by which He and they had travelled. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you." Such afflictions, too, were fulfilled in their brethren who had been in the world. Are they better than the apostles, who were "as gazing-stocks to the world, to angels, and to men?"[2]

There is yet another reason why Christians should never think persecution for Christ's sake, however severe, a strange thing. It is something they should be prepared for; for they have been very plainly taught that they may assuredly expect it in some form or other. "To this they have been called." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Marvel not that the world should hate you." "If any man will be my disciple, let him renounce himself, forsake all, take up his cross, and follow me." "All who will live godly, must," says the apostle, "suffer persecution." "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom."[3]

Christians, then, in no age of the church or the world, should count sufferings for the cause of Christ a strange thing. The primitive Christians were especially warned by our Lord, that the season which had arrived when Peter wrote this epistle, the period immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, was to be to his followers a period of peculiarly severe trial. It is in reference to the sufferings of those times he says, "See that ye be not troubled. All these

[1] Matt. xiii. 6, 21. Rom. v. 3.—ὑπομονή. [2] John xv. 20; 1 Cor. iv. 9.
[3] John xvi. 33. Matt. xvi. 24. Mark viii. 34. Luke ix. 23. 2 Tim. iii. 12. Acts xiv. 22.

things must come to pass. Lo, I have told you before." The exhortation of Peter is very nearly parallel with that of his brother Paul, in an epistle written about the same time: "Let no man be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that ye are appointed thereunto."[1]

II.—BE NOT DEPRESSED BY YOUR SUFFERINGS.

The second direction given by the apostle to his brethren is, "Be not depressed by your sufferings." "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of (blasphemed), but on your part he is glorified."

In these words the apostle first calls on them generally not to be depressed by their sufferings for Christ, but, on the contrary, to rejoice in them. He gives at the same time very good reasons for his injunction, reasons applicable to all sufferings, of whatever kind, for the cause of Christ; and he then calls on them not to be depressed by a particular form of suffering, that of reproach, which is very much fitted to have this effect; and enforces this exhortation by a very powerful and appropriate motive.

The apostle calls on Christians, for two reasons, not to be depressed by, but to rejoice in, their sufferings for Christ, whatever form they might wear; whether loss of property, reputation, liberty, or life:—First, because in enduring these sufferings, they are partakers of Christ's sufferings; and secondly, because their fellowship with Christ in his sufferings is, by the Divine appointment, connected with fellowship with him in his enjoyments at the revelation of his glory.

1. Christians in suffering for Christ are "partakers of the sufferings of Christ." In all their afflictions Christians may be viewed as having fellowship with Christ. When they suffer, they are treading in his steps, who was, by way of eminence, a sufferer;—"the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and it is the communication of his Spirit which enables them to bear their sufferings in the same temper in which he bore his. But there is a peculiar propriety in representing them, when suffering for their attachment to him, as being partakers of his sufferings. The sufferings they then endure are endured in the same cause in which his sufferings were endured: the cause of truth and righteousness, the cause of God's glory and man's happiness. They are inflicted on them just because they are like him; and they who persecute them would, had they it in their power, persecute him as they persecute them. They stand in his place; they are his representatives. They are "in the world as he was in the world;" and are therefore treated by the world as he was treated by the world. "Therefore the world knoweth not," acknowledgeth not in their true character, "them, because it knew not," acknowledged not, "him" in his true character. They are so identified with

[1] Matt. xxiv. 6. 1 Thess. iii. 3.

him, that he considers what is done to them as done to Him. "He that touches them touches the apple of his eye." "Saul, Saul," said he from the opened heavens, "why persecutest thou ME?" And, at last, from the throne of universal judgment, shall he say to those who have cruelly neglected, or despitefully used his suffering people, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to ME. Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it to ME."

Every true Christian, suffering in the cause of Christ, may say with the Apostle Paul, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh."[1] We are not to suppose that our Lord left any sufferings to be endured by Paul, or any one else, as the expiation of the sins or the ransom of the souls of his people. These great objects were fully secured by his sufferings "in his own body," "the body of his flesh by death." On the cross, in reference to them, he said, "It is finished." These sufferings were his personal burden. We partake of them, not in the way of supplementing them by our sufferings, but by becoming sharers of their precious fruits. They are accounted to us as if they had been ours; and we are acquitted, and justified, and saved by them, as a full satisfaction to the demands of the law on us as sinners. The endurance of these expiatory sufferings is something absolutely peculiar to him. We have, we can have, no part nor lot in that matter. The meaning of the apostle plainly is, 'I am so closely connected with Christ, that he regards those sufferings endured by me in his cause, as his sufferings in my body. I know there is a certain measure of such sufferings allotted to me, as to every other Christian. I have undergone already a part of those sufferings; and in the sufferings which I now undergo for the sake of you, Thessalonians, a part of his body, I rejoice to think that I am filling up what remains of the sufferings appointed me, and which I delight in thinking of as the sufferings of Christ in my body.' "The filling up spoken of by the apostle is not the supplementing Christ's personal sufferings, but it is the completing that share allotted to himself as one of the members of Christ—as sufferings which, from the intimacy of union between the head and the members, may be called *his* sufferings. Christ lived in Paul, spoke in Paul, wrought in Paul, suffered in Paul; and in a similar sense the sufferings of every Christian for Christ are the sufferings of Christ."

This is a view of suffering for Christ well fitted to prevent depression and to produce holy joy. "It seems obviously fit," as Leighton says, "that we should follow where our Captain led. It is not becoming that he should lead through rugged, thorny ways, and we pass about to get away through flowery meadows. As his natural body shared with his head in suffering, so ought his mystical body with him who is their head."

And as this is fit, so it is pleasant. It is good, no less than becoming well. "It is a sweet, joyful thing, to be a sharer with Christ in anything. All enjoyments wherein he is not are bitter to a soul who loves him, and all sufferings with him are sweet. The worst things of Christ are more truly delightful than the best things of the world;

[1] Col. i. 24.

his afflictions sweeter than their pleasures, his reproaches more glorious than their honors, and more rich than their treasures. Love delights in likeness and communion; not only in things otherwise pleasant, but in the hardest and harshest things which have not in them anything desirable, but only that likeness. So that this thought is very sweet to a heart possessed with this love. What does the world by its hatred and persecutions and revilings for Christ, but make me more like him, give me a greater share with him in that which he did so willingly undergo for me. 'When he was sought to be made a king he escaped,' says Bernard," the last of the Fathers; "'but when he was sought for the cross, he freely yielded himself.' And shall I shrink and creep back from what he calls me to suffer for his sake? Yea, even all my other troubles and sufferings I will desire to have stamped thus with this conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in the humble, obedient, cheerful endurance of them, and the giving up my will to my Father's. The following of Christ makes any way pleasant; his faithful followers refuse no march after him, be it through deserts, and mountains, and storms, and hazards that would affright self-pleasing, easy spirits. Hearts kindled and actuated by the Spirit of Christ, will follow him whithersoever he goeth." [1]

2. A second reason assigned by the apostle, why persecuted Christians should not be depressed by, but rather rejoice in, their sufferings is, that this fellowship with Christ in his sufferings is, by the Divine appointment, connected with fellowship with him in his enjoyments at the revelation of his glory. "Ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

The glory of Christ is the transcendent personal excellence, and official dignity and authority, which belong to the God-Man Mediator. Of that glory a partial manifestation is made in the word of the truth of the gospel, and in his administration of that universal empire which he possesses, as well as in his dispensations towards the church as a body, and towards its individual members, with whom he stands connected in a relation so intimate and peculiar. By those who by his Spirit are led to understand and believe the gospel, and by its light to contemplate the dispensations of his kingdoms of providence and grace, this glory is partially apprehended; and, whenever it is so, it casts all other glory into the shade. That which had glory has now no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth. The Word, who was made flesh, and dwelt among men, may be seen in his wondrous works as in a mirror; and all who in them behold his glory, acknowledge that it is a glory worthy of the only-begotten of the Father,[2] and that he is indeed full of grace and truth. And by the believing contemplation of this glory they themselves in their measure become glorious; they are changed into its likeness, made glorious by that which is glorious, converted by glory into glory.[3]

It is, however, but a dim reflection of his glory that reaches this dark earth. His glory, like himself, is "hid with God." The great body of men see it not at all, being destitute of the spiritual organs by which alone it can be discerned; and even they who see most of

[1] Leighton. [2] Ὡς μονογένους παρὰ πατρός. John i. 14. [3] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

it, see at best "through a glass," or by means of a mirror, "darkly;" "they know but in part, they understand but in part."

But this glory is not always to continue so imperfectly manifested in our world to its inhabitants. Out of his heavenly sanctuary he is yet to shine forth gloriously. His "glorious appearance," or the appearance of his glory, is "the blessed hope" of all who believe. At the close of the present order of things, he will come "in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, and in the glory of his holy angels." He will come "in clouds, and every eye shall see him." He will come "in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who know him not, and who obey not his gospel; and to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."[1] He will come to manifest the glories of his power, and wisdom, and righteousness, and grace, removing entirely and forever the cloud of mystery which hangs over the Divine character and dispensations, and manifesting himself at once in all the glories of untarnished holiness and inflexible justice, and infinite, omnipotent, all-wise benignity, as the righteous Judge and the all-accomplished Saviour.

This revelation at once of the glories of his righteousness and grace, shall be a source of the highest satisfaction to all his redeemed ones; and then shall be fully compensated all the privations, and sacrifices, and sufferings to which they have submitted for his name's sake. Then "shall they rejoice with exceeding joy." "In this last time," when the salvation to which in the present times they are kept by the power of God through faith shall be revealed, and in the revelation of which shall be revealed the glory of Christ the Saviour, "they shall rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory."

And they shall have good cause thus to rejoice; for when He who is their life appears, is manifested, they shall also appear, or be manifested, in glory. His glorious appearing, and their manifestation as the sons of God, by their entering on full possession of all the privileges of divine sonship, shall be contemporaneous. He shall appear in glory, and they shall be "like him, seeing him as he is." "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, when he shall sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations," he will make those who have been partakers of his sufferings exceeding glad in the fellowship of his glory. Having re-united their glorified spirits to their once mortal but now immortal bodies, he shall place them at his right hand as his honored friends, and shall say to them in the presence of the assembled universe of intelligent beings, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And then "they shall go into life eternal;"[2] and conquerors, more than conquerors, through his love, sit down with him on his throne, even as he, when he had overcome, sat down with his Father on his throne, and shall "reign in life" with him forever and ever. Such are the blessings which await all the faithful at the coming of the Lord; and there is reason to conclude that the measure of the enjoyment and glory of individuals, will correspond to the measure of labor and sufferings submitted to in his cause.

[1] 2 Thess. i. 7–10. [2] Matt. xxv. 31–46.

This is a consideration well fitted not only to prevent depression of mind under suffering, however severe, but to fill the heart with holy triumph, and enable the Christian to glory in such tribulation as is connected with so glorious a hope, counting it indeed "all joy to be" for Christ's cause "brought into manifold temptations." Well, as the pious Archbishop says, may Christians "rejoice in the midst of all their sufferings, standing upon the advanced ground of the covenant of grace, and by faith looking beyond this moment, and all that is in it, to that day wherein the crown of everlasting joy, that diadem of beauty, shall be put upon their head, and when sorrow and mourning shall fly away. Oh, that blessed hope! How soon will this pageant of the world, that men are gazing on, these pictures and fancies of pleasures and honors, falsely so called, vanish and give place to the real glory of the sons of God, where the blessed First-born among many brethren shall be seen appearing in full majesty, as the Only-begotten of the Father, and all his brethren with him, beholding and sharing his glory, having 'come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" Believing that if we suffer with him it is that we may be glorifiod together with him, we cannot but "judge that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us;" so that we may well rejoice amid these sufferings, especially as we know that "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."[1] There is something more than mere sequence here. "We are partakers of his sufferings; that, when his glory is revealed, we may rejoice with exceeding joy."

Having thus enforced the general exhortation not to be depressed by, but to rejoice in, sufferings for Christ, of whatever kind, from a consideration of the nature of these sufferings, as sufferings in which they have fellowship with Christ, and of the design and certain issue of such sufferings, the bringing of them into the fellowship of the Saviour's glory and joy, the apostle next calls their attention to a particular form of suffering, in its own nature peculiarly fitted to depress the mind, "reproach," and shows that even it is a proper ground not of depression, but of exultation. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

Reproach was one of the most common and most severe of the trials of the persecuted primitive Christians. And few things are more fitted to break the heart; as the psalmist, in the person of the Messiah, says, "Reproach has broke my heart; I am full of heaviness."[2] Their "names were cast out as evil." They were "accounted as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things;" and they were thus reproached for being Christians, for bearing his name, and professing his religion; for believing its doctrines, for cherishing its hopes, for observing its institutions, for obeying its laws. On this account they were represented as despisers of the gods, enemies of the commonwealth, haters of mankind, the accomplices or the dupes of an

[1] Rom. viii. 17, 18. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. [2] Psal. lxix. 20.

impostor, deceived or deceivers, dreaming enthusiasts or designing villains.

Now, says the apostle, be not discouraged by all this contumely. If you are really—what these men call you—Christians, you are truly happy, and are possessed of a true inward honor and glory, of which all their malignant abuse can in no degree deprive you. "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you;" that is, the Spirit of glory, *even* the Spirit of God, resteth on you, or, the Spirit of God resteth on you as the Spirit of glory.

There can be no doubt that the reference here is to the Holy Ghost, personally the Divine Author of our salvation, so far as it is an inward transformation. The appellation, "the Spirit of glory," may be considered as equivalent to the glorious Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ; as "the Lord of glory" means our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.[1] But it seems more probable that the Holy Spirit is here termed the Spirit of glory, to indicate that he is the author of true glory and honor. Unbelieving men reckoned the primitive Christians despicable and dishonorable, and called them so in their reproaches. But were they indeed so? No, by no means. The Spirit of God, who is the fountain of true honor, rested on them, and by his influence formed them to a character which was the proper object, not of contempt, but of approbation and admiration to all good and wise intelligent beings.

It is as if the apostle had said, 'You are really honorable, and your honor is not of a kind of which these reproaches can deprive you. They count you fools; but the Spirit of wisdom and good understanding rests on you, and makes you wise unto salvation: he gives you a sound mind, and makes you of good understanding. They count you weak, and contemn you for your imbecility in the sight of the Lord; but he makes you "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" he is in you "the Spirit of power," as well as "of a sound mind." They reckon you mean, but he gives you true dignity and grandeur of character; he makes you "great in the sight of the Lord," and decks you with ornaments becoming your dignity as kings and priests unto God, even your Father. Is not the consideration of what he has made you, more than sufficient to neutralize the painful effects of all that they can call you? If he has made you wise, what though they call you fools? If he has made you strong, what though they call you weak? If he has made you illustrious, what though they should represent you as despicable? His bearing witness with your spirits that you are indeed the sons of God, "and if sons then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus," is surely more than enough to counterbalance all their false and malignant reproaches.' Such seems to be the import of the motive which the apostle employs to induce Christians to rise above the disheartening influence of reproach for Christ, and even to rejoice in it. If you are Christians indeed, you have a real abiding honor, springing from the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of glory resting on you, dwelling in you, which their reproaches can in no degree affect.

The meaning and reference of the concluding words of the fourteenth verse, "On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he

[1] James ii. 1.

is glorified," are somewhat doubtful. They may mean, what from their rendering our translators obviously supposed they did mean, This Spirit of glory which exists in you is evil spoken of, or blasphemed, by those men who reproach you for the name of Christ, who load you with abuse because you are Christians. He made you what you are as Christians, and, in reproaching you, they indeed blaspheme him. They who mock at Christians, as Christians, play at a dangerous game. The time is coming when the Son of God will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it to them, ye did it to me;" and the Spirit of God will say, 'In reproaching them you blasphemed me, in ridiculing my work you poured contempt on my person.' Let the men of the world take care. What they think but a jest, may prove a very serious affair. The Jews thought they were putting to death a poor unfriended Nazarene. It turned out that they crucified the Lord of Glory. The enemies of vital Christianity may think they are only running down a set of wrong-headed enthusiasts; it may turn out they are coming very near the sin "that hath no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." It is as if the apostle had said, their reproaches are more against the Spirit that animates you than against you.

But while *they* blaspheme him, *you* glorify him; and surely it is very meet that it should be so. Christians should honor the Holy Spirit who makes them honorable. They should show forth his praises, giving visible form to his inward work, by proving themselves to be under his influence as "the Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind." This is the best way of meeting the reproaches of men against ourselves as Christians, and against the Spirit by whom, as Christians, we are animated and guided. Let us show what manner of spirit we are of; that it is indeed the Spirit of glory that rests on us; a Spirit which makes "pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated;" a Spirit which leads us to think on and to practise "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." [1]

While this is important truth, and while the words in themselves may be considered as well enough fitted to convey it, I am rather disposed to go along with those interpreters who consider the *verbs* here as used impersonally, and think the apostle expresses this sentiment: On their part there is evil-speaking, blasphemy, reproach; but on your part there is glory, true honor. They reproach, indeed, but ye are not dishonored. The Spirit of glory rests on you, and therefore all their reproaches cannot rob you of true honor, cannot make you really contemptible. You are what the Spirit of God has made you, not what they represent you. What a comfort is this to a calumniated Christian, and how well fitted to enable him in patience to possess his soul, amid calumnious reproaches and cruel mockings!

There is a question which naturally enough is suggested by what has been said. Since we all, with scarcely an exception, profess the religion of Christ, have we ever been exposed to suffering on account of our religion? Is the fiery trial a strange thing to us? Have we never been "partakers of the sufferings of Christ?" never been ex-

[1] James iii. 17. Phil. iii. 8.

posed to "the reproach of Christ?" If we have not, I am afraid there is something wanting, something wrong. The world and Christianity are substantially the same things they were in the primitive times; and, though the world may take other ways of showing its hatred and contempt of Christianity and Christians now, than it did then, that hatred and contempt still exist unmitigated, and will find a way to manifest themselves when they meet with their appropriate objects. But it is not everything called Christianity that the world hates; it is the Christianity of the New Testament. It is not the name, it is the thing. There is much that is called Christianity which the world does not at all dislike; it is its own work. There are many called Christians who are of the world, and the world loves them. A woe is denounced on the Christian man, of whom all men speak well; and if we have in no way incurred the hatred of an ungodly world, we have reason to fear, that though we have the name we have not the thing. It is a faithful saying, "Every one who will live godly must suffer persecution." We are not to court persecution: if we are consistent Christians, we will not need to do so. It will come of its own accord. The world will be consistent in its hatred, if Christians are but consistent in their profession and conduct. Let us take care that we do not sinfully shun it. Let us hold fast the faith and profession of the gospel, to whatever privations and sufferings this may expose us. Let us part with everything rather than the Saviour and his truth, the testimony of a good conscience, and the hope, through grace, of rejoicing with exceeding joy at the appearing of his glory; let us show how highly we value him and his gospel, by the cheerfulness with which we submit to such trials as attachment to them may bring on us.

III.—BE NOT ASHAMED OF YOUR SUFFERINGS.

The third direction given by the apostle to his persecuted brethren is, Be not ashamed of your sufferings in the cause of Christ. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

The apostle proceeds on the principle, that there are sufferings which are indeed disgraceful; that it is a possible thing that Christians may expose themselves to such sufferings, which in their case must be doubly disgraceful; that it is the duty of Christians carefully to guard against rendering themselves liable to such sufferings; that there are sufferings to which Christians may be exposed, merely because they are Christians, merely because they profess the faith, obey the laws, observe the institutions of Christ; and that such sufferings, however disgraceful in their own nature, and in the estimation of men, are no proper ground of shame to those who meet with them: but, on the contrary, should be subjects of gloriation and thanksgiving to God.

When suffering is just punishment, it is always disgraceful. Crime in all its forms is a shameful thing, something base and unworthy;

and so must punishment be, which proclaims the man a criminal, which at once publishes the fact that he has been guilty, and brands him with public reprobation on account of his guilt. It is shameful to commit murder, and therefore it is shameful to suffer as a murderer. It is shameful to commit theft, and therefore it is shameful to suffer as a thief. It is shameful to violate any law of man established by competent authority, which is not opposed to the law of God, that is, to be an evil-doer, a malefactor in the eye of the law, and therefore it is shameful to be punished for such a violation as an evil-doer or malefactor. When such punishments have been incurred, the person subjected to them ought to be ashamed; and, when they are not felt to be shameful by the criminal, it is a proof of most deplorable obtuseness of moral apprehension and feeling.

Nor are sufferings which are the punishment of violation of positive public law the only sufferings which are of a shameful kind. All suffering which is the effect of improper conduct is shameful, just in proportion as the conduct which has produced it is shameful. There are many very improper acts or habits which are not, and cannot be, the subject of public law, lying beyond or below its sphere, which yet naturally bring down on those characterized by them appropriate, and it may be severe punishment. For example, "the busy-body in other men's matters," whether his intrusive interference originate in mere impertinent curiosity, or in worse motives, is likely to suffer by exclusion from respectable society, by general contempt, and, it may be, in even more substantial forms; and his sufferings, whatever they may be, are disgraceful sufferings—sufferings of which he ought to be ashamed.

By many interpreters, I am aware that "the busy-body" here is considered as equivalent to "the seditious person," who, in a private station, plots against the existing order of society, meddling with things too high for him, and who consequently is naturally enough classed along with the murderer and the thief, as drawing down on himself deserved punishment from the hand of violated law; but I think it more likely that the apostle meant to warn Christians against exposing themselves, not only to shameful suffering, as violators of public law, but to shameful suffering, originating in impropriety of behavior of whatever kind.[1]

It may seem strange that the apostle should caution those to whom he wrote, and whom he had represented as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; as begotten again to a living hope; as the heirs of an incorruptible, undefiled, unfading inheritance, reserved in heaven for them," to which they were "kept by the power of God through faith;" as having "tasted that the Lord is gracious;" as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation;" it may seem strange that he should have thought it needful to caution such persons against exposing themselves to the penalties which the law denounces against theft and murder, or even to the minor punishments society inflicts on the pragmatical intermeddler.

[1] See note A.

It may be supposed that the apostle meant not so much to warn those to whom he wrote against murder, theft, and impertinent intrusion in other men's matters, as against affording even the shadow of an occasion for their being punished for these or similar crimes and improprieties by their enemies, who were disposed to speak evil of them, and to punish them as malefactors. "By well-doing they were to seek to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;" and their conduct was to be so harmless, and blameless, and circumspect, that when charged before the tribunals with such crimes, their adversaries should find it impossible to substantiate their charge, and difficult even to give anything like plausibility to it; so that the result might be, that, instead of their being visited with the shameful punishment of murderers and thieves, "they who speak evil of them as of evil-doers, should be made ashamed of falsely accusing their good conversation in Christ;" or if their enemies, as they often did, should, without evidence and against evidence, proceed to punish them, that it might be made manifest to all that it was not for crimes which might be alleged, but which had not, could not be, proved against them, but simply for their being Christians, that they were punished.

This, however, is not by any means the only passage in which Christians are cautioned against very gross sins. Exhortations to Christians, in the apostolic epistles, not only proceed on the principle, that there were false professors in the primitive churches, who might discredit their profession by unholy conduct, but on the principle, that in the truly converted man, that is, "in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" and that, but for the restraining influence of the Spirit and Providence of God, there is scarcely any violation of the Divine law, into which remaining depravity, stimulated into active operation by powerful temptation, may not hurry him. To use the words of an old Scottish expositor, "Except Christians employ Christ's Spirit to apply that virtue which he hath purchased by his death, for the changing of their nature, and mortifying of the love of sin in their hearts, and study watchfulness in their carriage, they will readily break out in those abominations for which even heathens would justly put them to suffer: for this direction of the apostle's does import, that except Christians did watch and pray, and make use of Christ's death for mortification of sin within them, to which duties he had stirred them up before, they were in hazard to break out in the sins here mentioned, and so be put to suffer as murderers, thieves, evil-doers, and busy-bodies in other men's matters." [1]

These practices, referred to by the apostle, were shameful in themselves, shameful by whomsoever committed; but it is obvious, they were peculiarly shameful in Christians. It was disgraceful for a heathen to suffer for such causes; what, then, must it have been for a Christian thus to suffer? Sin is hateful in every man, additionally hateful in a professor of Christianity; nowhere so hateful as in the heart and life of a child of God. It is not wonderful then that the apostle should say, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters." By exposing himself to punishment for the violation of the laws, a

[1] Nisbett.

Christian would draw down discredit, not only on his own character, but on the Christian cause, giving occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. He would destroy his own inward peace, and, by making shipwreck of character, render it scarcely possible that he should ever have it in his power to repair, in any good measure, the injury he had done to the worthy name.[1]

It ill becomes such persons to complain of their sufferings, but it well becomes them to be ashamed of them, and especially to be ashamed of their cause. Nothing is more deplorable than to find men bearing the name of Christ, after involving themselves in suffering by their imprudence and sin, exposing themselves to the penalties of the law, or drawing down odium on themselves and reproach on religion, by their conceited officiousness or impertinent intermeddling; instead of being ashamed of their conduct, actually taking credit for it; pleasing themselves with the thought that they are persecuted for righteousness[3] sake, when they are only suffering for their faults; and imputing that to the malice of their enemies, which is but the natural result of their own folly and wickedness. It becomes such persons to blush and weep; to retire as much as may be from the public gaze, and "to walk softly all their years."

But however carefully and successfully the primitive Christians might avoid all such disgraceful sufferings, discreditable to themselves and injurious to their religion; sufferings they were not likely to escape, sufferings of another kind. Though they should violate no civil law which was not in direct opposition to the Divine law, though they should "live quiet and peaceable lives," minding their own business, and not intermedling with what did not concern them; and though they should act so circumspectly that even their enemies, watching for their halting, could find nothing which they could plausibly represent as a violation of law, or an undue interference with the affairs of others, yet still they were likely, aye, they were sure, to meet with sufferings—it might be very severe sufferings; sufferings in their external form of a very shameful and degrading character—just because they were Christians;[2] just because they made a consistent profession of the faith of Christ, acknowledging him as their teacher and Lord, observing his institutions and obeying his laws. Though, as in the case of Daniel, no occasion might be found against them on other grounds, an occasion would be found against them "concerning the law of their God."[3]

Such were the sufferings inflicted on the apostles and first teachers and professors of Christianity, of which we have a record in the Acts of the Apostles; sufferings, for the infliction of which, in some cases, no cause was even alleged but that they were Christians; and in others where, though other causes were alleged, this was indeed the true reason. The time was come of which our Lord had spoken, when his followers were to be "hated by all nations,"[4] both by the Jews and the Gentiles, "for his name sake," just because they were Christians. To be a Christian, was a sufficient reason with the Jews why a man should be cast out of the synagogue; and with the Romans, why he

[1] "Martyrem facit non pœna, sed causa."—AUGUSTIN.
[2] See note B.
[3] Dan. vi. 5.
[4] Matt. xxiv. 9.

should be treated as a criminal. At a somewhat later period we find an imperial edict, that of Trajan, which seems to have been intended rather to mitigate the severity of the treatment to which Christians, as Christians, had been exposed, requiring that, though Christians were not to be officially sought after, such as were accused and convicted of an adherence to Christianity were to be put to death;[1] their Christianity, apart from everything else, being considered as a capital offence.

And if thus, as Christians, they were exposed to sufferings so serious in the shape of legal inflictions, it is quite plain that, in the ordinary intercourse of life, they must have been liable to an endless variety of annoyances, living in the midst of men who, whether Jews or Heathens, regarded their religion with sentiments of abhorrence and contempt. These sufferings were in many cases, in their own nature, of a degrading character. Christians were, as the apostle expresses it, "shamefully entreated." The punishments inflicted were such as were commonly inflicted on the vilest criminals, on felons and slaves. Stripes and the cross, punishments which could be legally inflicted on no Roman citizen, fell to the lot of many of them, from the hands of the magistrate; and from the great body of their fellow-citizens they received "cruel mockings;" their names were cast out as evil, and they were treated by them "as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things."[2]

But of sufferings of this kind, however ignominious in their own character, however fitted to express the contempt of those who inflicted them, and excite the shame of those who endured them, they were not to be ashamed. They were not to count them really dishonorable. In truth, they were not. The most ignominious treatment, when it is unmerited, reflects dishonor not on him who innocently endures, but on him who unjustly inflicts it. To profess what we believe to be true, and to do what we believe to be right, to refuse to give either explicit or tacit approbation of what we account false and wrong, to acknowledge obligations to a Divine benefactor for favors of inestimable value, in the manner which that Divine benefactor enjoins, can never be dishonorable. No contumely, poured on Christians, could in the slightest degree affect the truth or excellence of Christ's doctrine and law; nor, supposing the Divine origin of these, could such calumnies for a moment occasion any reasonable doubt as to the wisdom and rectitude of the conduct of those who had embraced that doctrine, and submitted to that law. The disgrace plainly lay with the authors, not with the victims, of such shameful oppression and cruelty. The persecutor, not the persecuted, had reason to be ashamed of the sufferings inflicted on Christians, as Christians.

But the apostle exhorts the persecuted Christians, not only not to be ashamed of such sufferings, but to "glorify God on this behalf." They are to consider these ignominious sufferings as indeed an honor and a privilege, and they are to thank God for them, and while under them to act such a part as will glorify him; their sense of the honor done to them being expressed, not in words only, but in cheerful sub-

[1] Plinii Epp. ix. 97, 98. [2] Heb. xi. 36. 1 Cor. iv. 13.

mission to these sufferings, and in patient and heroic endurance of them. They are to reckon it a proper subject of thanksgiving, that to them "it is given on behalf of Christ Jesus, not only to believe but to suffer, for his sake," and to "rejoice that they are counted worthy so suffer shame for his name." They should account it a token of the confidence reposed in them by their Divine leader, when he places them, as it were, in the fore ranks in the battle, and calls on them to "suffer great things for his name sake." They should rejoice in the opportunity thus given them of showing their gratitude to him who for them "endured the cross and despised the shame;" who, in the cause of their salvation, "gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, hid not his face from shame and spitting, but set his face as a flint," and amid all contumelies "held fast the confidence and rejoicing of his hope," that he should not ultimately be ashamed.[1]

They should be thankful for these sufferings as fitted to promote their personal spiritual improvement, both in holiness and in comfort, such "tribulations working *patience*," that is, leading to perseverance, not to apostasy; such "patience working experience," that is, such perseverance leading to *proof*, both of the reality and the strength of the principles of the new life; and such "experience working hope," such proof strengthening the hope of eternal life, by showing, that it is indeed founded on the gospel really believed, and will prove a hope which shall never make ashamed.[2] Well may Christians glory in such tribulations; tribulations fitted, and intended to have, secured of having, such glorious results.

Still farther, and finally, they should glorify God on account of such sufferings, because their tendency, when endured in the right spirit, was greatly to advance the cause of Christ. 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.' Persecution very generally falls out to the furtherance of the gospel. The patient, joyful endurance of most cruel and contumelious wrongs by Paul and Silas, probably was highly influential in producing the conversion of the Philippian jailer. The faith and patience of the martyrs amid their sufferings, more impressively than all their eloquence, declared the power of Divine grace, and the efficacy of the gospel; made the torturers ashamed, and induced beholders to take share with those who were tortured. This consideration had great influence on Paul's mind, enabling him to glory in his sufferings as a Christian, and to glorify God on their behalf "I rejoice in my sufferings for you," says he to the Colossians, "and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church;" and in the Epistle to Timothy, "I *endure*" patiently, joyfully suffer, "all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory."[3]

Christians in every country, and in every age, are bound to regulate themselves by the direction we have been endeavoring to illustrate. From a regard to the honor of their religion and their Saviour, they are bound carefully to avoid everything which may justly bring on

[1] Acts v. 41. Phil. i. 29. Acts ix. 16. Heb. xii. 2. Isa. l. 6, 7.
[2] Rom. v. 3–5.
[3] Col. i. 24. 2 Tim. ii. 10.

them contempt or punishment, knowing that Christ has entrusted the reputation of his religion to their care; and that its character is so identified with theirs, that the one cannot be injured without affecting the other; while at the same time they are never, under the influence of a false shame, to shrink from suffering for professing the faith, and obeying the law, of their Lord, however ignominious a form that suffering may wear, ever bearing in mind his impressive declaration, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father and the holy angels." [1] He who counts these faithful sayings, will not be ashamed of suffering as a Christian. He will be disposed to say with the apostle, "I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds; yet I am not ashamed—for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

IV.—PERSEVERING IN WELL-DOING, COMMIT YOUR SOULS TO GOD UNDER SUFFERINGS.

The last direction which the apostle gives to persecuted Christians is, "Persevering in well-doing, commit the keeping of your souls to God under your sufferings." "For the time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him, as to a faithful Creator."

A careful reader will see that these three verses are very closely connected; that the statements in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses are the foundation on which the directions in the nineteenth are based, or the motives by which they are enforced. The statement is twofold. Severe afflictions are awaiting the professors of the faith of Christ, and still more tremendous evils are impending over those who believe not the gospel, or who apostatize from the faith. And the direction is twofold also. Commit your souls to God, that ye may be enabled to sustain those severe afflictions; and do this in well-doing, in a constant continuance in well-doing, in a perseverance in the faith, profession, and practice of Christianity, that you may escape those tremendous evils. Such seems the connection of the apostle's thoughts.

"The time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God; a time in which the righteous shall scarcely be saved: therefore let them who suffer by the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him as to a faithful Creator." The "house of God," in Old Testament language, would signify either the temple of Jerusalem; or—understanding the word figuratively as equivalent to family, a sense in which it is so often used—the Israelitish people. In the

[1] Matt. x. 32. Luke xii. 8.

language of the New Testament, it signifies the christian church, Christians. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that ye are the temple of God?" "His house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope steadfast to the end." It denotes them who obey the gospel of Christ, as contra-distinguished from the unbelievers or the apostates, who do not obey the gospel of Christ.[1] "The righteous" is obviously just another appellation for the same individuals, and describes their character as opposed to the wicked, "the ungodly, and the sinner." The words then signify, 'a period is arrived, or is just at hand, when a very severe trial of Christians, a trial of some continuance, is about to commence; when judgment or rather *the* judgment,[2] shall begin at the house of God.'[3]

There seems here a reference to a particular judgment or trial, that the primitive Christians had reason to expect. When we consider that this epistle was written within a short time of the commencement of that awful scene of judgment which terminated in the destruction of the ecclesiastical and civil polity of the Jews, and which our Lord had so minutely predicted, we can scarcely doubt of the reference of the apostle's expression. After having specified wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, as symptoms of "the beginning of sorrows," our Lord adds, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. They shall deliver you up to councils and to synagogues, and ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake: Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And then many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold: but he that shall endure to the end, shall be saved. Except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."[4]

This is *the* judgment which, though to fall most heavily on the holy land, was plainly to extend to wherever Jews and Christians were to be found, "for where the carcass was, there were the eagles to be gathered together;" which was to begin at the house of God, and which was to be so severe that the "righteous should scarcely," that is, not without difficulty, "be saved." They only who stood the trial should be saved, and many would not stand the trial. All the truly righteous should be saved; but many who seemed to be righteous, many who thought themselves to be righteous, would not endure to the end, and so should not be saved; and the righteous themselves should be saved, not without much struggle, exertion, suffering; "saved as by fire." Some have supposed the reference to be to the Neronian persecutions, which by a few years preceded the calamities connected with the Jewish wars and the destruction of Jerusalem.

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 16. Heb. iii. 6. [2] Τὸ κρίμα.
[3] There seems here an allusion to Ezek. ix. 6. "Slay utterly old and young—and *begin at my sanctuary*."
[4] Matt. xxiv. 9–13, 22.

Now, on entering on this scene of severe trial, they who were to "suffer according to the will of God"—a phrase marking the origin of their sufferings rather than the manner in which they were sustained; nearly equivalent to, 'on account of the Divine will,' that is, on account of their doing the Divine will—are enjoined to "commit the keeping of their souls to God, as to a faithful Creator." To commit their souls, that is, themselves, into the hands of God, to be kept by him, is just under a deep sense of their own incapacity to meet and sustain the trial in a way glorifying to God and advantageous to themselves, to resign themselves entirely to the guidance of God's providence, and word, and Spirit, in the expectation that he will make their duty obvious to them in circumstances of doubt and perplexity; and, when their duty is made plain to them, enable them at all hazards to perform it, trusting not to their own understanding, but to the Divine wisdom; relying not on their own energies, but on the power of God; trusting that he will indeed keep that which they commit to him; protect them from all real evil; allow them to be exposed to no unnecessary, no useless suffering; lay on them no load of labor or suffering which he will not enable them to sustain; "not suffer them to be tried above what they are able to bear, but, with the temptation, give them a way of escape;" "deliver them from every evil work, and preserve them unto his heavenly kingdom." [1]

This is obviously the general meaning; but there is something peculiar and emphatic in the phrase, "Commit the keeping of your souls to him." They were to commit the care of their bodies, their lives, their reputation, their property, their relations, to God, with a distinct understanding that they may be called on by him to part with them all; and well pleased to part with them all, in the assurance that their souls are safe in his keeping; safe in life, safe in death, safe forever; "bound in the bundle of life with the Lord their God." [2]

He who thus commits the keeping of his soul to God, is ready for all trials, however severe. Such a person will be "anxious about nothing;" and while "in everything, by prayer and supplication, he makes his requests known to God," his need shall be supplied according to God's glorious riches; and "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep his heart and mind through Christ Jesus." [3]

The persecuted Christians are encouraged thus to commit the keeping of their souls to God, by the consideration that he is "a faithful Creator." He is their Creator. He not only is the "Father of their spirits" and the former of their bodies, as he is of the spirits and bodies of all men, but He has "of his own will begotten them by the word of truth, through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead, so that they are a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." They are not only his creatures, but his "new creatures;" his "workmanship created anew unto good works." [4] To whom should they commit the keeping of their souls but to him? They are his property; more his than their own. He is able to take care of them. He who made them can preserve them. Conservation does not require greater power than creation. And he is disposed to take care

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 18.
[2] 1 Sam. xxv. 29.
[3] Phil. iv. 6, 7.
[4] Heb. xii. 9. James i. 18. Eph. ii. 10.

of them. He hates none of his creatures; he loves all his new creatures with a peculiar, an unchangeable, an eternal love. Looking at him as their Creator, they may well be persuaded that he is able and that he is willing to keep that which, in obedience to his own command, they have committed to him.

And then he is not only a Creator, but "a faithful Creator."[1] He is faithful to fulfil the expectations of support and protection, which the very relation of Creator is fitted to excite in the mind of an intelligent loyal creature. The new creature cannot but have an expectation, that he who has given it true life will preserve it, will never let it perish. This is an instinct of the new nature; and "he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry and save them." "The Lord preserveth all them that love him." Besides, he has given to them as his creatures, his new creatures, "exceeding great and precious promises." We will quote a few of them: "In six troubles God shall deliver thee; in seven no evil shall touch thee. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, the Lord shall preserve thy soul. When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee, and the flood shall not overflow thee; when thou passest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle on thee. I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any one pluck them out of my Father's hand. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can separate" those created anew in Christ Jesus "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord." "Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it." "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said it, and shall he not do it? Hath he promised it, and shall he not make it good?" "All these promises are yea, amen, in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us."[2]

Nothing but this committing unreservedly the keeping of the soul to God as a faithful Creator, could meet the exigencies of the case, and fit for so severe and complicated a trial. This only would enable the persecuted Christians so to endure the trial as to "obtain the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to those who love him."

Connected with the statement, that severe trials were awaiting Christians, the apostle makes an impressive announcement of the dreadful doom of "those who obey not the gospel of God." The beginning of the judgment was to come on the house or family of God; the end of it on them who obey not the gospel of God. The first drops were to fall on the former, the collected tempest on the latter; the first were to be chastened, severely chastened, but on the last was to come "wrath to the uttermost." The first were to be "saved

[1] "The relation of Creator implies *omnipotent* love; the attribute of faithful *eternal* love declared in his promises."—BATES.

[2] Job v. 19–25. Psal. xci.; cxxi. 7, 8. Isa. xliii. 2. John x. 28–30. Rom. viii. 38, 39; 1 Thess. v. 24. Num. xxiii. 19. 2 Cor. i. 20.

as by fire," the others were to be "destroyed with an everlasting destruction;" the one getting into a place of safety with difficulty, the other finding no place of shelter from the "fiery indignation which was to devour the adversaries" of God. This is more strongly expressed in the interrogative form than it could be by any direct affirmation. "What shall the end be? Where shall they appear?"

It may be right to remark in passing, that the eighteenth verse is a quotation from the Greek version of the thirty-first verse of the eleventh chapter of the book of Proverbs. Our English version, which is an accurate rendering of the Hebrew text, gives a meaning, which seems at first altogether different. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed on the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner." Though these words may, and probably do mean, 'Even really good men are chastened for their sins, and, if so, surely the wicked and the sinner shall be punished with a severity suited to the heinousness of their guilt,' a sentiment not materially different from that in the passage before us; at the same time this does seem an instance in which the inspired writer merely uses the words of the Greek translation of the Scriptures, as the vehicle of his own thoughts, without any particular reference to their meaning and bearing in the place from which they are borrowed.

If we have not misapprehended altogether the meaning of this paragraph, the direct reference in these words is to the tremendous evils which came upon the Jewish opposers of Christianity very soon after these words were written. These were "the days of vengeance," days in which there was "such affliction as has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created till that time, neither shall be."[1] Nor are we called to limit these words to the calamities which befell the unbelieving and impenitent Jews in their own land and other lands, dreadful as, we know from the authentic narrative of their own historian Josephus, these were. These to them were not "the end" of the judgment. They were foreshadowing symbols of that everlasting destruction in the world to come, which awaited them, along with all who, like them, "obey not the gospel of God;" but, in opposition to all the means used for reclaiming them, continue ungodly and sinners.

As the statement concerning the severe trial to which Christians were to be exposed is made the basis of the exhortation, "Commit the keeping of your souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator;" so this statement respecting the perdition of ungodly men seems to us to be the basis of the exhortation, "Commit the keeping of your souls to God *in well-doing*." It is evident that "to suffer for well-doing" as referred to at the twentieth verse of the second chapter, is just equivalent to suffering as a Christian, suffering on account of the consistent profession of the faith of Christ. And the "constant continuance in well-doing," in which Christians are "to seek for glory, honor, and immortality," is plainly just the persevering faith of the doctrines and practice of the duties of Christianity. The persecuted Christians were to continue in well-doing. They had done well in embracing the gospel, denying themselves, and becoming followers of

[1] Mark xiii. 19.

Christ; and they must persevere in doing well, by holding fast their profession.

Should they not thus persevere in well-doing, but, under the power of terror and shame, abandon the cause of Christ, making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, they would make a miserable exchange of circumstances. They must in this case take their place among the ungodly and sinners, who obey not the gospel of God. However severe the trials of Christians may be, they are nothing compared with the punishment which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving. Even in this world, some of the apostates of that age, in seeking to escape the persecution to which Christians were exposed, involved themselves in still more dreadful calamities. They who in Jerusalem remained faithful to Christ, following his command, left the doomed city, embracing an opportunity very wonderfully offered to them, and so were saved, saved with difficulty; while the apostates continued, and perished miserably in the siege and sack of that city.

In the times of the severest persecution, it is men's wisdom, by embracing the gospel, to cast in their lot with the afflicted people of God. That is the only way of escaping evils immeasurably more dreadful than any which the malignant ingenuity of earth or hell can inflict on the saints; and it is absolute madness, to purchase security from persecution, and all that this world can bestow, at the price of apostasy. "For he who turns back, turns back to perdition." Since, then, trials so severe were awaiting the church of God, and destruction so awful was impending over those ungodly men and sinners who, either by impenitence or apostasy, were disobedient to the gospel of God, how appropriate and how powerfully enforced the injunction of the apostle, "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator."

The two injunctions are most intimately connected. It is only he who is continuing in well-doing, that in the day of severe trial can commit the keeping of his soul to God, as to a faithful Creator; and it is only he who commits the keeping of his soul to God, as to a faithful Creator, that in the day of severe trial will continue in well-doing. All others will become weary in well-doing under persecution; and silently withdraw from, or openly renounce connection with, the oppressed, persecuted church of Christ.

There are two general principles of a practical kind, and of very general application, naturally suggested by what we have said, to which I would call your attention for a moment before we conclude.

They who obey the gospel may count on varied, and, it may be, severe trials, previously to their obtaining "the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory;" and they who obey not the gospel can reasonably count on nothing but everlasting perdition.

They who obey the gospel are as sure of salvation as the love and power, the faithfulness and wisdom, of God can make them. The righteous, those "justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," those sanctified by the Spirit through the

truth, shall certainly be saved. When it is said they are "scarcely saved," the reference is not to the uncertainty of their being saved, but to the difficulties and trials they may experience in the course of their being saved. All Christians are not tried as the Christians to whom Peter wrote, the Christians at the close of the Jewish dispensation; but all Christians meet with afflictions, and meet with afflictions because they are Christians; all suffer, and all suffer as Christians. We must never think ill of a cause merely because it is persecuted, nor indulge dark thoughts respecting the spiritual state and prospects of men merely because they are very severely afflicted. The absence of trial is a worse sign than what we might be disposed to think the excess of trial. "If ye were without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then were ye bastards, and not sons."[1] But it is not exposure to trial, it is the endurance of trial, in "a patient continuance in well-doing," that is the characteristic mark of those who obey the gospel of God. Let Christians, then, not wonder at their trials, however severe. Let them not count strange even the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had happened to them; and let them seek, by rightly improving their trials, to convert them into proofs of saintship and means of salvation.

They who obey not the gospel of God can reasonably count on nothing but unmixed misery, everlasting perdition. "If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of those who obey not the gospel of God? and, if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" These words most strikingly bring before our minds both the severity and the certainty of the punishment which awaits the wicked. If even the children of God, the objects of his peculiar love, are severely chastened for their faults in this season of Divine forbearance, what can those who are the objects of his moral disapprobation and judicial displeasure expect, but the unmitigated punishment of their sin, under an economy which is the revelation of his righteous judgment, where justice is to have free course and to be glorified? If the trials to which the righteous are exposed are so varied and severe, that, though saved, they are "saved as by fire," saved with difficulty, with a struggle, after a "great fight of affliction," what shall be the state of those who are not to be saved at all—not saved, but destroyed with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power? If even children are so severely chastened, how shall hardened rebels be punished? "If these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Oh! that men who obey not the gospel of God could be but induced to lay these things to heart. If they continue disobedient to the gospel, there is no hope; for there is no atoning sacrifice, no sanctifying Spirit, no salvation, but the sacrifice, the Spirit, the salvation revealed in the gospel.

But why should they not obey this gospel? Is it not "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation?" Oh! why will they reject the counsel of God against themselves? If they continue to reject this counsel of peace they must perish: but there is no necessity of

[1] Heb. xii. 8.

rejecting this counsel of peace, but what originates in their own unreasonable, wicked obstinacy.

I conclude, in words full of comfort to the first of those classes of whom I have been speaking, and full of terror to the second. May God carry them home with power to the hearts of both! "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." "The Lord is not slack concerning his declaration, as some men count slackness; but he is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto repentance." "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."[1]

NOTE A. p. 641.

It must be admitted that there is a strange disparity between "the busy-body," and "the thief," and "the murderer." It is an ingenious conjecture, but nothing more, of Dr. Mangey, that a very early transcriber may have written ἀλλοτριοεπίσκοπος, which appears in all existing manuscripts, for ἀλλοτριοεπίκλοπος, "a purloiner of other men's property." There is more weight in Bishop Barrington's suggestion—"This caution probably owed its origin to the temper and conduct of the Jews at this period. They were peculiarly fond of intermeddling in the public councils and concerns of other bodies of men." Josephus, de Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. xviii. § 7, 8, gives an excellent comment on this apostolical prohibition. He relates that his countrymen, "needlessly mixing with the Greeks assembled at Alexandria on their own affairs, and acting the part of spies, greatly suffered for it." This took place A.D. 66, just about the time this epistle was written.—*Vide* BOWYER's Conjectures, pp. 603, 4.

NOTE B. p. 643.

Christians were persecuted just because they were Christians. The words of Tertullian are remarkable:—"Non scelus aliquod in causa, sed nomen Christianus, si nullius criminis reus, nomen valde infestum." Not less remarkable are the words of Pliny to Trajan (Epistt. x. 97):—"Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui nunquam; ideo nescio quid et quatenus aut puniri soleat, aut quæri. Nec mediocriter hesitavi *an nomen ipsum, etiamsi flagitiis careat*, an flagitia cohærentia nomini puniantur. Interim in iis qui ad me tanquam Christiani deferebantur hunc sum secutus modum. Interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani? Confitentes iterum et tertio interrogavi, supplicium minatus. Perseverantes duci jussi; neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerant alii similis amentiæ, quos, quod cives Romani essent, annotavi in urbem remittendos." "It seems," as Lord Hailes observes, "that Pliny did not know what inquiries ought to have been made, and therefore he limited *his* to two words, 'Christianus es?' It required but other two, such as 'Ego quidem,' or 'Ita sane,' and the cause was judged and the culprit despatched to execution. Blessed era in which, without any captious question as to flaws in the indictment, exceptions to the verdict, or motion for arrest of judgment, a trial for life might be begun, carried on, and brought to a comfortable issue by the pronouncing of about twenty letters! and what mighty obligations did not the primitive Christians owe to their equitable and intelligent judges, who, by a single and simple interrogatory, relieved them from the delays and suspense of a long trial!"—Disquisitions concerning the Antiquities of the Christian Church, chap. iv. p. 100.

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[1] 2 Pet. ii. 9; iii. 9. Prov. xxix. 1.

DISCOURSE XXI.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS ENJOINED AND ENFORCED.

1 Pet. v. 1–5.—The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock: and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

In the preceding portions of this epistle, the apostle has instructed those to whom he wrote in many of their religious and moral duties as individuals, and also in many of their duties as members of domestic and civil society. In the paragraph which comes now before us, he writes to them that they "may know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God." He gives them a directory for their conduct, as office-bearers or private members of a christian church. The duties of office-bearers in the church to those committed to their charge, and the duties of the members of the church, both to their office-bearers and to each other, are here very succinctly stated, and very powerfully enforced.

With regard to the office-bearers of the church, here termed "the elders," the whole of their duty is represented as consisting in acting the part of shepherds and overseers of that portion of the flock or family of God committed to their care; the temper or disposition in which this duty must be discharged is described, both negatively and positively, "not by constraint, nor for filthy lucre, not as lords of God's heritage," but "willingly, of a ready mind, as ensamples of the flock;" and to secure a conscientious performance of this duty, besides employing his personal influence with them, as being himself "also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed," the apostle turns their attention to the peculiar character of the church as "the flock," and "heritage of God," and to the rich reward which shall be conferred on the faithful under-shepherds and overseers, by the chief Shepherd and Overseer at his "glorious appearing," and their "gathering together to him."

With regard to the members of the church, who, with a reference, we apprehend, to their office-bearers being termed "elders,"[1] are de-

[1] Πρεσβύτεροι.

scribed by the correlative appellation "younger,"[1] or juniors, just as if the office-bearers had been termed fathers, they would have been termed children; their duty to their office-bearers is described under the general word, "submission."

The duty of all connected with the christian church, whether as officers or private members, is enjoined under the expression, mutual subjection. Humility is enjoined as necessary in order to the right discharge of all these classes of duties; and the cultivation of this disposition, so requisite to the prosperity and good order of the church, is recommended by a strong statement, couched in the language of Old Testament scripture, of the peculiar complacency with which God regards the humble, and the contemptuous reprobation with which he regards the proud. Such is a brief analysis of the paragraph, which we shall find of use in guiding our thoughts in our subsequent illustrations. The peculiar duties of the rulers in the christian church, the peculiar duties of the members of the christian church, and the duties common to both,—these are the important topics to which in the sequel your attention will be successively directed.

I.—OF THE DUTIES OF THE RULERS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

And first, of the duties of the rulers in the christian church. For the right illustration of this part of our subject, it will be requisite that we consider, first, the appellation here given to those who rule in the christian church, and to whom that appellation properly belongs; secondly, the duty which they are required to perform; thirdly, the manner in which that duty ought to be performed; and lastly, the motives by which the performance of this duty in this manner is enforced.

CHAP. I.—THE APPELLATION HERE GIVEN TO THE RULERS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, "ELDERS."

§ 1.—*The origin and meaning of the appellation.*

The appellation here given to the rulers in the church, those who were to act the part of shepherds to it, as the flock of God, the part of overseers to it as the family of God, is that of "elders," or presbyters, which last term is just the Greek word with an English termination. "The elders, or presbyters, who are among you, I exhort." The word in its literal signification describes the persons to whom it is given as of comparatively advanced age. As rule ought to be committed only to those who are characterized by knowledge and wisdom; as, in ordinary circumstances, these are not to be expected in a high degree in very young persons, since both qualifications are generally understood to be of somewhat difficult acquirement and slow growth; as in the simplest form of human governments, the domestic, the elder members of the society are the ruling members in it; and as, where the ruling orders in civil society are elective, they are generally

[1] Νεώτεροι.

chosen from among those of at least mature age, it is not at all wonderful that the appellation, primarily significant merely of superior age, should have been very generally employed to denote superior dignity and authority.[1] The Hebrew ordinary civil rulers are termed "the elders of Israel." The assembled magistrates of Rome were termed the senate or meeting of elders, and its individual members senators. In some of the most extensively spoken continental languages, the title expressive of dignity and rule, and which we would render by the word lord, actually signifies just elder;[2] and the English term "alderman," descriptive of municipal authority and power in many cities, is just an antiquated form of the words "elder man."

It has been the opinion of some of the most judicious and learned students of the history of apostolical and primitive Christianity, that the constitution of the christian church was, under apostolic guidance, "modelled for the most part after that religious community with which it stood in the closest connection, the Jewish synagogue; such modifications, however, taking place as were required by the nature and design of the christian community, and the new and peculiar spirit by which it was animated."[3] In this case it would have been strange if the designation of the managers of the affairs of the Jewish Synagogue, "elders," had not been transferred to the superintendents of the christian church. And we cease to wonder that we have no particular account of the formal establishment of the office of elders, it being very probable, that the existing order of things in the synagogues for religious instruction and discipline, which had been originally organized by inspired men, was silently, and without the formality of express legislative enactment, transferred, under apostolic superintendence, and with apostolic sanction, to the meetings of the disciples, the churches of Christ.

With the exceptions of "the deacons," a term signifying ministers or servants, who obviously as deacons had no part in the government of the church, "the elders" appear to be the only ordinary set of office-bearers in the apostolic and primitive churches. In an inspired account of the constitution of the christian church, we are informed, when her only Lord and King ascended on high, "he gave," that is, he appointed, and qualified, and commissioned, "some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ."[4] The office of the apostles was altogether peculiar, and they who filled it were intended for the benefit of the church in all ages. They were the accredited messengers of Christ. They had his mind.[5] He spake by them, and wrought by them; and though they had long left this world, in their inspired writings they are still in the church, according to the promise of their Lord, "sitting on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of

[1] Θὺ μόνον τὴν πρὸς τὸ ὂν πίϛιν αὐτῶ μαρτυροῦσιν οἱ χρήσιμοι, τὴν βασιλίδα τῶν ἀρετῶν ἀλλὰ καὶ πρῶτον αὐτὸν ἀπέφηναν πρεσβύτερον.—Τὸν δὲ φρονήσεως καὶ σοφίας, τῆς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν πίστεως ἐρασθέντα λέγοι τις ἂν ἐνδικως εἶναι πρεσβύτερον παρωνυμοῦντα πῶ πρώτῳ. PHILO. Πρεσβυτέρους merito et sapientia dici, non ætate. ISIDOR. HISPALENS. CARPZOV. Sac. Ex. in Ep. ad Heb. p. 500.

[2] Señor, seigneur, of which our own respectful compellation "Sir" is a contraction.

[3] Vitringa, Whately, Neander. [4] Eph. iv. 11, 12. [5] 2 Cor. ii. 16.

the spiritual Israel;" and in the same writings they are still "going into all the world, proclaiming the gospel;" and their Lord by his Spirit is with them, and will continue to be with them till the end of the world. The prophets necessarily disappeared when the prophetic spirit was withdrawn. The evangelists seem not to have been properly office-bearers in the church, but messengers from the church to the world lying under the wicked one; and the missionary, in the later ages of the church, seems to fill a place similar to that occupied by the evangelist in the primitive age. The pastors and teachers, which terms do not seem to denote two distinct classes of men, but two functions of the same general class, appear to be the only permanent ordinary office-bearers appointed for the putting and keeping in fit order, for that is the meaning of the word rendered "perfecting the saints," those sanctified in Christ Jesus; called to be saints, the disciples, the brethren; for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; and, as we shall see by and by, these pastors and teachers were just the same persons who are here called elders.[1]

In another inspired account by the same apostle of the constitution of the christian church, we are informed that "God hath set some in the church,—first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles: then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."[2] Here it is plain that the apostles, the prophets, the workers of miracles of various kinds, do not belong to the permanent order of the church. Fact has decided that question. "Helps," or helpers, seem plainly the deacons; while the teachers and the governments are just the same class of persons as the pastors and teachers, their two different functions of instruction and rule being mentioned in an inverse order in the two cases.

As this order of men received the appellation of elders on the same ground as rulers have generally been designated by some such title,[3] and as occupying in the church materially the same place as the Jewish elders did in the synagogue; so, from the great design of their appointment, they are not unfrequently termed bishops, which is an anglicised Greek word, disguised in this way in our version of the New Testament, there is reason to believe, to serve a purpose, and an unworthy one, but which means neither more nor less than our English word "overseers;" by which word indeed, to serve a purpose too, and the same one, it is in one or two cases rendered. That the only bishops known in the New Testament are the same class of persons who are termed elders, may be made very plain in a very few words. Paul, on his journey from Macedonia to Jerusalem, sent from Miletus, and called the elders of Ephesus: and, when these elders had come, he exhorted them to "take heed to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, bishops." Paul,

[1] It is by no means meant to throw any doubt on the permanence of the order of deacons. The obviously, however, were not intended to be "rulers" in the church.

[2] 1 Cor. xii. 28.

[3] Πρεσβύτερος, id est, senior, est nomen quod tribuitur Ministris Ecclesiæ, sive quia olim Ministri Ecclesiæ plerumque deligebantur, qui jam essent grandioris ætatis: sive potius quia Ministri Ecclesiæ moribus senes referre debent, iisque is tribuendus honor, qui senibus tribui solet; ita igitur nomen non est ætatis sed officii et dignitatis.—SUICER.

writing to Titus, states, that he had left him in Crete, to ordain elders in every city. He enumerates the qualifications of an elder, and then adds, "for a bishop," or overseer, "must be blameless," &c.[1] If this does not identify the bishop with the elder, what can do it? Suppose a law pointing out the qualifications of a sheriff were to say—A sheriff must be a man of good character, great activity, and resolute spirit, for it is highly necessary the chief magistrate of the county should be of unspotted reputation, would it be possible to come to any other conclusion than that, in the eye of the legislature, the sheriff and the first magistrate of the county were just two names for the same officer? How inconsistent would it be to say to a captain—In appointing sergeants you must appoint only men of such qualifications, specifying them, and then add, for these are the proper qualifications for a general or a field-marshal? But we need not go farther than the text in search of the identification of the christian elder, and the apostolic bishop, and the apostolic pastor. "The elders I exhort: Act the part of pastors to the flock; shepherd them, acting the part of bishops, or overseers."[2] The elders, in other words, are exhorted to act the part of good pastors, good bishops.

The whole care of a christian church as a spiritual society, including instruction, superintendence, and discipline, was committed to these elders, though it is very probable that in the primitive churches, as among us, there were authorized public teachers who were not elders, and had no share in the management of any church.

It is plain there was a plurality of such elders in every church. These formed the eldership or presbytery of that church. In the church of Jerusalem, when met for government, we find just the apostles, extraordinary officers, the elders, ordinary officers, and the brethren or church members who listened to their deliberations, and to whom their decision seemed good. We know there were deacons in that church; but their office was not rule, and therefore they are not named. The church of Philippi, which was set in order by the apostle, was composed of "the saints in Christ Jesus," the private members; "the bishops," overseers; elders, who ruled; and "the deacons," who served.[3]

While the entire spiritual charge of the church was committed to the presbytery or meeting of elders, what we are in the habit of calling the session, there is evidence, not that the elders were divided into a pastor or pastors who only taught, and bishops who ruled; but that, while all the elders severally and in a body superintended and ruled, there were some of these elders "who labored in word, and doctrine," devoting themselves chiefly to the exposition and enforcement of the doctrine and law of our Lord Jesus.

It is comparatively a modern, at any rate it is not a New Testa-

[1] Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5–7. Ἐπειδὴ λανθάνει τοὺς πολλοὺς ἡ συνήθεια, μάλιστα τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης, τοὺς ἐπισκόπους πρεσβυτέρους ὀνομάζουσα, καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους ἐπισκόπους, σημειωτέον τοῦτο ἐντεῦθεν (Acts xx. 17, 28) καὶ ἐκ τῆς πρὸς Τίτον ἐπιστολῆς καὶ ἐκ τῆς πρὸς Τιμόθεον πρώτης.—Πρεσβυτέρους καὶ τοὺς ἐπισκόπους, καὶ ὁ τῶν πράξεων βίβλος οἶδε λεγομένους.—In hunc loc.—ŒCUMENIUS.

[2] Ποιμάνατε—ἐπισκοποῦντες. [3] Phil. i. 1.

ment usage, to apply the term "pastor" exclusively to those teaching elders, that term naturally expressing the whole work of the christian eldership; and, like the kindred term "bishop," being given in the New Testament to christian elders indiscriminately. But that such a distinction as that between elders who taught and ruled, and elders who only ruled, existed from the beginning, is made probable by the reasonableness and almost necessity of the arrangement, and its obvious tendency to secure the gaining in the best way and in the greatest degree the ends of the christian eldership; and appears to me proved by the passage in the First Epistle to Timothy, v. 17, of which, after all that has been said for the purpose of reconciling it to the episcopal or independent order of church polity, I am disposed to say, with Dr. Owen, that "on the first proposal of this text, that 'the elders who rule well are worthy of double honors, especially those who labor in word and doctrine,' a rational man who is unprejudiced, who never heard of the controversy about ruling elders, can hardly avoid an apprehension that there are two sorts of elders; some of whom labor in word and doctrine, and some who do not so."

§ 2.—*Qualifications of christian elders.*

With regard to the qualifications which are necessary for filling the office of a christian elder, we have full information in the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus. "This is a true saying," says he, in his First Epistle to Timothy, iii. 1, "If a man desire the office of a bishop," an overseer, an elder, in the christian church, "he desireth a good work. . A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a broiler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own family, how shall he take care of the house," the family, "of God? Not a novice," a late convert, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of those who are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." "Ordain elders," says he to Titus, "in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince gainsayers." These are qualifications which are requisite in all elders, though some of them may be required in a higher degree in those who are called to labor in word and doctrine.

§ 3.—*Of the manner in which Elders were invested with office.*

With regard to the manner in which the elders were invested with these offices in the apostolic church, we have comparatively little in-

formation. We know that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church which was gathered by their ministry; and that Titus was enjoined by Paul to ordain elders in every city where the gospel had taken root. But we should undoubtedly err, were we concluding that these offices were appointed by the apostles or evangelists, whatever their authority might be, without consulting the brethren. When we reflect on the nature and design of a christian church, and take into consideration the probable method of electing an apostle in room of Judas, and the distinctly recorded facts respecting the election of the deacons, we cannot doubt that the elders were elected by the brethren from among themselves, and presented by them to the apostles, evangelists, or other church rulers, who, with fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands, solemnly set them apart to the discharge of the functions of the office to which they had been chosen; thus, in the most impressive way, intimating their conviction of their fitness for the office, and their cordial acknowledgment of them as fellow-laborers, and commending them to the special care and blessing of their common Lord. So much for the elders to whom the apostle here addresses so solemn and affectionate an exhortation.

CHAP II.—OF THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN ELDERS.

§ 1.—*Of the figurative terms in which these duties are described, acting the part of a shepherd and an overseer.*

Let us now, in the second place, attend to the duty which is here enjoined on these elders. They are enjoined to "feed the flock of God, and to take the oversight of it." The two words employed to describe the elder's duty, are suited to the two figurative representations here given us of the objects of their care. If viewed as the flock of God, they are to feed, or rather, as the word properly signifies, they are to act the part of shepherds to them. If viewed as the property of God, or the family of God, they are to act the part of overseers in reference to them. The Israelitish people are often in Scripture termed the flock of God, and their rulers appointed by him, their shepherds; they are represented also as the peculiar property and as the family of God, and their rulers as overseers, tutors, governors, appointed by the Father. The christian church is the antitype of the Israelitish people. The whole body of believers are the flock of God, the property of God, the family of God; for in the new economy all things are of God by Christ Jesus. We are Christ's, Christ is God's. Jesus Christ who laid down his life for the sheep, is the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, whose own the sheep are. To him is committed the care of the property which was purchased, redeemed to God, by his blood; and he, as the Son, is intrusted with the management of the whole family called by his name. He is the shepherd, and bishop or overseer, of their souls.[1] Christian elders are here represented as under-shepherds, subordinate overseers; and their

[1] John x. 11–14. Heb. iii. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 25.

duty to that portion of the flock of God committed to their care, is what the apostle here refers to.

It has, I believe, been very generally supposed by interpreters, that the expression rendered "feed" refers solely to instruction; and that rendered by "taking oversight" to discipline and government. If the term "feed" adequately represented the force of the original term, there might be a good deal said for this mode of interpretation; for, no doubt, knowledge is mental food, and instruction is spiritual feeding; but the truth is, the word signifies, generally, act the part, discharge the duty, of a shepherd, and is ordinarily, when used in a figurative sense, significant of ruling, being applied to kings.[1] To procure and administer food to the flock is an important part of the shepherd's duty, but it is not his only duty; he must strengthen the diseased and heal the sick, and bind up the broken, aud bring again that which was driven away, and seek that which was lost. He must go before them, and guide them, and govern them. The whole duties of the christian eldership are included in shepherding the flock; and equally extensive is the other figurative representation of the elder superintending, that is, taking care of. If it refer to property, how can such a property, consisting of immortal minds, be taken care of? Must not instruction, putting them in the way of taking care of themselves, be a part of the overseer's work? and, if it refer to a family, must not the good steward, tutor, and overseer, the ruler over his master's family, not merely superintend the conduct of the household, keep them at their proper work, out of mischief, away from danger, but "give to every one his portion of meat in due season?"[2] The first term does not, then, exclusively refer to instruction; nor the second to superintendence and government. They are two figurative representations, each of them embracing the whole compass of the duty of the eldership of a christian church.

§ 2.—*Of the duties themselves.*

The whole of the duties of the christian eldership do, however, naturally enough range themselves under the two heads of instruction and discipline, or superintendence and government, and to these in their order I wish very briefly to call your attention.

(1.) *Instruction.*

First, then, christian elders are to act the part of shepherds and overseers to those under their care, by providing and administering instruction to them. It is an important part of the shepherd's duty to find wholesome nourishing pasture for his flock. It is an important part of the duty of the overseer of the family to see, that every member of it be furnished with a sufficient portion of suitable food. "The truth as it is in Jesus," the doctrine and the law of Christ, serve in

[1] Ποιμαίνω is a word much more comprehensive in its meaning than βόσκω. Ποιμὴν is applied to Kings, Eurip. Phœn. 1157. Hom. Il. i. 263. Xen. Mem. iii. 1, 2. Vide Casauboni Exercitt. Anti-Baron. xvi. § 133, Χριστὸς ποιμὴν, ὅτι ἡμᾶς νέμει.—CHRYSOSTOM.

[2] Luke xii. 42.

the spiritual economy a purpose analogous to that which food does in the animal economy. Suitable wholesome food must be eaten and digested, in order to health and bodily growth, and, indeed, to the continuance of animal life; and Divine truth must be understood and believed, and thus become influential on the intellect, and conscience, and affections, in order to the continuance of spiritual life, and to the healthy exercise of the functions of the new creature. The private members of the church, as well as the ministers of Jesus Christ, are "nourished up by the words of faith and good doctrine," whereunto they attain; and the "new-born babes grow" by "the sincere milk of the word," which the instincts of their new nature lead them to desire.

Regularly and effectually to meet this exigence is one leading object of the christian eldership; and where suitable provision is not made for securing the growing intelligence of the members of a christian church, there must be, on the part of the eldership, most blameable neglect of duty. When the disciples come together on the first day of the week to observe the ordinances, the ordinance of "doctrine" or teaching must be attended to; and the assembled brethren must be taught to hold fast and observe all things, whether doctrine, law, or institution, which the Lord has commanded them. On these occasions, the elders who labor in word and doctrine should be prepared, after close study and fervent prayer, to present to their brethren a clear and impressive exhibition of the meaning, evidence, and practical bearing of some of our Lord's doctrines, or a perspicuous and practical explanation and enforcement of some of our Lord's laws, having a reference to what they know to be the necessities and capacities of their audience, taking care not to confine themselves to a few topics to descant on which may be peculiarly easy to themselves, and palatable to their hearers, but endeavoring, as much as possible, to bring out in the course of these exercises, so far as they have discovered it, "the whole counsel of God;" and withholding nothing that can be profitable, whether it may be pleasing or otherwise. When we consider how much the great body of Christians, belonging to the classes whose time is chiefly devoted to obtaining the necessaries and comforts of life for themselves and families, must be dependent on the instructions received on the Lord's-day for their knowledge of christian truth, the importance of christian teachers endeavoring, on such occasions, to communicate the largest possible amount of distinct impressive instruction, both doctrinal and practical, must appear great indeed.

The christian preacher, if he is really wise when teaching the people knowledge, will give good heed to his doctrine that it be wholesome and nourishing; and, if possible, palatable. He will seek to find out, first, true and important thoughts, and then plain acceptable words; and he will endeavor that his words be as goads, entering readily, and as riveted nails when they have entered, sticking fast.[1] The teaching elder ill discharges this, his highest duty, who satisfies himself with common-place statement or empty declamation; or who spends the hours devoted to christian instruction in metaphysical dis-

[1] Eccles. xii. 13.

cussions, and "questions that profit not." It has been well said, "To preach, to show the extent of our learning or the subtlety of our wit, to blazon them in the eyes of the people with the beggarly accounts of a few words which glitter, but convey little light and less warmth, is a dishonest use of sacred time; it is not to preach the gospel, but ourselves:" it is not to feed, but to starve our hearers.

It is the duty of the christian-teaching elder, not only thus to teach publicly on the Lord's-day, but also, as God gives opportunity, to teach from house to house, taking such opportunities for presenting christian truth in a form more familiar than befits the character of public instruction, and more suited to the circumstances of the individuals addressed. It seems to me, also, that a christian eldership are but following out the spirit of the injunction in the text, when they endeavor to secure, and earnestly recommend for the perusal of those under their care, the use of a collection of really good and appropriate books, fitted to promote the knowledge of christian truth, the cultivation of christian feeling, and the performance of christian duty, by enabling their hearers better to understand the Bible.

The use of all appropriate means, especially the preaching of the word, for securing that the brethren under their care grow in accuracy and extent of christian knowledge, must ever be considered, by the christian eldership, as the fundamental part of their duty. The church is the school of Christ, and the elders are the schoolmasters. The maxim, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, is utterly inapplicable to the religion of Christ. Knowledge is necessary in order to faith; and a well instructed christian mind is the only soil in which can grow and flourish the fair flowers and the rich fruits of devout feeling and holy conduct, "which are by Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God."

The duty of instructing the brethren, lies with peculiar weight on the teaching elder. It is his business, his appropriate work, to which above all things he must give himself, and to which he must endeavor to make all things subservient. Whatever may be cursorily done, this must be done carefully; and he must "study to prove himself a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." At the same time, every christian elder, though not called to labor in word and doctrine, ought to endeavor to promote the instruction of the brethren. Every elder, or bishop, should be "apt to teach;" both able and disposed to communicate christian instruction to his brethren. Indeed, till "the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," it is the duty of every christian man "to teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord." And the christian elder, whose ordinary and principal business is to superintend and govern, is not only warranted, but bound, to turn to account his intercourse with the brethren in discharging his appropriate functions, for directly as well as indirectly endeavoring to promote their progress in that knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, through which, and through which alone, grace, mercy, and peace, can be multiplied to them; through which, and through which alone, they can become the holy, happy, active, useful persons, that all members of a christian church ought to be.

This duty of instruction must be performed to *all* the flock. The command of the chief Shepherd is not only, "Feed my sheep," but "feed my lambs;"[1] and there does seem something wanting in a christian church, where provision is not made, and made by the elders, directly or indirectly, personally or by guiding and superintending the exertions of others, for the instruction of the younger branches of the family. The instruction of christian children is the appropriate work of christian parents, and is never likely to be so efficiently performed as by them; but it seems plain, that not only is it the duty of christian elders, in their work of superintending and governing, to see that parents discharge their obligations in this respect, but also, by a system of religious training, common to all the children connected with the church, not to supersede, but to assist and supplement, parental instruction.

In these remarks, I have been preaching chiefly to two individuals: "my true yoke-fellow, who serves with me as a son in the gospel of Jesus Christ," and myself. The next department of the discourse will be directed to the brethren of the eldership, who rule, though they do not labor in word and doctrine. But if those illustrations of the law of Christ in reference to elders, serve, as I hope they will, their proper purpose in us and in them, the congregation are likely to be fully as much the better for them, as for any sermons they have ever heard addressed more directly to themselves. The importance and the difficulty of rightly instructing a christian congregation, especially such a congregation as this, consisting of so many individuals, placed in such a variety of circumstances, and possessed of such a variety of capacities and tastes for religious mental training, are, I trust, justly estimated by your ministers; and it is our earnest wish, "by the manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." We would not willingly conceal nor corrupt any portion of the doctrines or the laws of our Lord. We wish to preach Christ, the sole authoritative teacher and lawgiver, the sole atoning Saviour, the sole sovereign Lord; "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." "Being allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, we would so speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth the hearts." Sensible of the importance of rightly dividing the word of truth, we would "give attendance to meditation and to reading," as well as to exhortation and doctrine; we would "shun profane and vain babblings, and speak the things, and only the things, that become sound doctrine;" in our teaching, "showing incorruptness, and sound speech that cannot be condemned."[2]

Help us, brethren, with your prayers. Pray for us, that our understandings may be more and more opened, that we may understand the Scriptures; that, being more thoroughly and extensively taught of God ourselves, we may be the better fitted for teaching you. "Brethren, I beseech you, for the Lord Jesus' sake, and for the love

[1] John xxi. 15–17.

[2] 2 Cor. iv. 2. Col. i. 28. 1 Cor. i. 23. 2 Cor. iv. 5. 1 Thess. ii. 4. 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15. 1 Tim. vi. 20. Tit. ii. 1, 8.

of the Spirit, that ye strive together with us in your prayers for us; that our minds and hearts may be more and more filled with the truth, and the love of it; and that utterance may be given us, that we may open our mouths boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel; that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified among us;"[1] that we may speak it as it ought to be spoken, with firm faith and melting affection. It is your interest as well as ours, that you should be thus employed. "Were people much in the duty of prayer for their teachers, not only would the ministers be the better for it, the people themselves would receive back their prayers with much gain into their bosom. They would have the returned benefit of it, as the vapors that go from below fall down again upon the earth in sweet showers, and make it fruitful. If there went up many prayers for ministers, their doctrine would drop as the rain, and distil as the dew, and the sweet influence of it would make fruitful the valleys, the humble hearts receiving it."[2] And we pledge ourselves to reciprocate your friendly supplications. "God forbid that we should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you." Daily will we "bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and in earth are named," that the gospel may come to you not in word only, but in power, with the Holy Ghost, and much assurance: "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power in them that believe," transforming them by the renewing of their mind, purifying their hearts by faith, filling them with all joy and peace in believing; and "that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, being filled with all the fulness of God."[3]

(2.) *Superintendence.*

I proceed to remark, in the second place, that christian elders are to act the part of shepherds and overseers to those under their care, by *superintending* and *governing* them. The shepherd has but imperfectly done his work when he has procured for, and administered to, his flock, wholesome nourishment. He must watch over them; he must not allow either wolves or goats to mix with them, and, should such find their way among them, he must use appropriate means to get rid of them; he must endeavor to prevent the sheep from straying, and, when they do wander, he must employ every proper method to bring them back; he must endeavor to preserve them from the attacks of disease, and administer suitable preventives

[1] Rom. xv. 30. Eph. vi. 19. Col. iv. 3. 2 Thess. iii. 1.
[2] Leighton. [3] Eph. i. 17–19; iii. 16–19.

and medicines for prevailing maladies; and even at personal hazard he must protect them from those beasts of prey who go about seeking to devour them. The overseer or steward has but imperfectly done his duty, when he has secured that the children are furnished with suitable instruction. It is his business to see that they pay a proper attention to the instruction prepared for them, and make due improvement. He must look to the formation of their character and the direction of their conduct. He must take care that they are neither idle nor mischievous; that they are kind to each other, and dutiful to all. Both the shepherd and the overseer must be superintendents and governors. In like manner, the furnishing the flock and family of God with an abundance of wholesome spiritual nourishment, though, as we have seen, one most important part of the duty of christian elders, is by no means the whole of it. The elders are not only to "speak the word of God" to their charge; they are to "have," hold, or exercise, "rule over them;" they are to "care" for them, to "watch for their souls." [1]

The duties of rule or superintendence which devolve on christian elders, may be considered in reference either to the christian society over which they are placed viewed as a body, or to the individual members of that body. The fundamental part of this duty, so far as the society is concerned, and without a careful performance of which the other duties, whether to the society or to its members, can only be very unsatisfactorily discharged, is to take care that it be composed of the right materials. How could a shepherd manage a flock, composed of swine as well as of sheep? or how could an overseer manage a family, into which aliens, "strange children," were continually intruding themselves? Nothing can be plainer from the New Testament than this, that though christian churches are the grand means for converting the world, the apparent conversion of the worldling must precede, not follow, his admission into the church. The great ends to be gained by christian churches, whether in reference to their Lord, as living manifestations of his truth, and holiness, and grace; or in reference to their members—their edification in knowledge, faith, love, and christian excellence and usefulness generally; or in reference to the world lying under the wicked one —their conviction and conversion,—will be secured just in the degree in which these societies are formed of men who really know and believe the truth, and have felt its transforming efficacy. The churches of Christ must be churches, that is, assemblies, societies, of saints, "separated persons," "devoted persons," "sanctified persons," separated from the present evil world; devoted to the service of God and his Son; sanctified by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Such are the designations given the members of the church in the apostolic epistles. "Beloved of God, called to be saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, calling on his name, brethren, faithful, elect," that is, selected "by a spiritual separation to the obedience of faith, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, men that have obtained like precious faith with the apostles."

The office-bearers are "stewards of the mysteries of Christ." It is

[1] Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24. 1 Tim. iii. 5; v. 17.

their business "to take the precious from the vile." They are builders of the temple of the Lord, which ought to be composed of "living stones," of precious materials; and they must take care that the materials they employ in building it up be not "wood, hay, and stubble," but "gold, silver, and precious stones." [1] Christian elders should admit none to the communion of the church except those who make an intelligent and credible profession of the faith; who, in the judgment of an enlightened charity, are Christians in the only true sense of that word; and should, as in every church will be the case, persons be admitted who are not what they appear to be, when the real character is developed, the elders ought, in the exercise of an impartial discipline, to exclude them from a place they should never have occupied; and by continuing to occupy which, while their characters remain unchanged, they can only do injury to all the interests which the christian church is meant to subserve.

Christian elders are to seek to promote this healthy state of a christian church, not only by careful admission and discipline, but by such a clear and faithful exhibition of the holy doctrines and laws of Christ, and by keeping the society so actively engaged in the great object of their association, the promoting each other's edification, and the advancing the cause of Christ in the world, as will make ungodly men little desirous, while they continue ungodly, to enter such a society; and if, by a mistake on either side, they have entered it, will make them soon feel that they can be comfortable in it in no other way than by imbibing the spirit and submitting to the law of its great Founder.

It is the duty of christian elders not only thus to endeavor that the society be composed only of right members, but in all their meetings to preside among them, keeping before them the law of Christ, taking care that they "continue steadfastly" in the observance of christian institutions, keeping the ordinances committed to them by the apostles, holding the traditions as taught in the Scriptures, the "apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers;" that they do all things as a body which Christ Jesus has commanded them, and that they do them all "decently, and in order."

But the christian elders must not only thus shepherd the flock of Christ, oversee the family of God, viewed as an organized body, but they must act the part of shepherds and overseers to the individuals of which that flock and family are composed. This is indeed necessarily implied in the right discharge of their duty to the society as a society; for how can a society be kept pure but by its members being such as they should be; and how can this be secured but by superintending and watching individual conduct? The spiritual shepherd must "look well to his flock, and know the state of his herd." How otherwise can he "strengthen the diseased, heal the sick, bind up that which is broken, and bring again that which is driven away;" how is he to "warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to support the weak? [2] It is the duty of the christian elder not impertinently to iutrude into private affairs, but carefully and affectionately to watch the whole conduct of those under his care, and

[1] Jer. xv. 15. 1 Cor. iii. 12–15.

[2] Ezek. xxxiv. 4. 1 Thess. v. 14.

to administer caution, encouragement, advice, comfort, rebuke, and exhortation, as circumstances require; and to do all this as an under-shepherd, an appointed overseer, in the name of Him, who, counting him trust-worthy, has put him into this ministry.

In thus taking care of the house of God by ruling it, christian elders are never to forget the true nature of their rule: they are "men under authority." They are not arbitrary despots, they are not even constitutional law-givers; they are but constituted administrators of the law of the one Master, who is in heaven. The flock is to be managed according to the revealed will of the great, good, Proprietor-Shepherd, whose own the sheep are. The family is to be governed according to the distinctly declared mind of the one Father, who is in heaven.

But christian elders, as well as those under their care, are to remember that they are *rulers* under him, that they must take their orders from him, that they are accountable to him, that the sheep are not to dictate to the shepherds, nor the children to the tutors and governors. If christian elders seek to please even the members of the church in any other way than by pleasing them for their good, for edification, by declaring and executing the law of Christ, they will prove that they are not the servants of Christ, but the servants of men. The authority of christian elders, though subordinate and deputed, is real authority; so that, in the right discharge of their official duties, "he that despiseth them despiseth not man but God." He that contemns the humblest subordinate magistrate, regularly appointed and acting within the limits of his delegated authority, is guilty of disobedience to the supreme power. Such is a short view of the duty of christian elders, as shepherds of the flock, overseers of the family of God, duty included under the two heads, instruction, and superintendence or government.

CHAP. III.—OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THESE DUTIES ARE TO BE PERFORMED.

Let us now, in the third place, turn our attention to the account which the apostle gives of the manner in which these duties should be performed. In discharging their duties, christian elders are not to act "by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples of the flock."[1] We shall consider shortly, in their order, these characteristics of the right mode of performing the duties of the christian eldership.

§ 1.—"*Not by constraint, but willingly.*"

Christian elders are to shepherd the flock, and superintend the family of God, "not by constraint, but willingly." Some have sup-

[1] "Dum pastores ad officium hortari vult, tria potissimum vitia notat, quæ plurimum obesse solent: pigritiam, scilicet, lucri captandi cupidatem et licentiam dominandi. Primo vitio opponit alacritatem aut voluntarium studium: secundo liberalem affectum: tertio moderationem et modestiam qua seipsos in ordinem cogant."—CALVIN.

posed that these words refer rather to the flock or family than to the shepherds or overseers; that they describe rather the means to be employed than the temper to be cherished by christian elders; that they intimate that the flock of Christ are to be ruled, not by *force*, but by *persuasion*; that they are to be drawn, not driven; and that the christian shepherds are to take as beacons, not examples, those Jewish shepherds who "with force and with cruelty ruled"[1] the sheep of the Lord. This is unquestionably truth; important truth; but it cannot be brought out of the apostle's words without using violence. The three double clauses, all of them, obviously refer to the state of the mind of the christian elder in the discharge of his duty. Even some of those interpreters who have seen this clearly, have yet fallen into a slight misapprehension as to the precise meaning and reference of the words before us. From not noticing that these words are equally connected with both the figurative injunctions of the duties of the christian elder, and from being more occupied with the sound than the sense of the phrase, "taking the oversight," it has been common to consider these words as describing exclusively the temper in which the office of the eldership should be undertaken, not the disposition in which its duties should be habitually performed. It is obvious, however, that it refers to "feed the flock of Christ," as well as to "taking the oversight;" and it is equally obvious, that the word rendered "taking the oversight" does not refer to a person's entering on the eldership, though very applicable to such a person, but to persons who are elders; and might have been still more literally rendered, "superintending them;"[2] that is, not so much undertaking, as exercising, superintendence.

The passage has often been quoted to prove, that no man should be compelled by ecclesiastical authority to take office in the church generally, or to take office in a particular church; but its bearing on this subject, though important, is indirect. The meaning is, that a christian elder should perform his duties, not reluctantly, as something that he is obliged to do, but cheerfully, as something that he delights to do; not as a task to a hard master that he must perform, but as an honorable and delightful service, which carries its reward in the satisfaction it affords. The more the christian elder is constrained by a regard to the authority of Christ, a sense of his grace, and the love of the brotherhood, to the discharge of these duties, so much the better; but these are species of constraint that not only do not interfere with, but necessarily imply, willinghood.[3] It is true of duty generally, and eminently true of the duties of the christian eldership, that they have no value in the estimation of God, and are little like-

[1] Ezek. xxxiv. 4.—"Though most expositors apply μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλ' ἑκουσίως to the bishop's willingness to his work, yet Dr. Hammond applieth it to the bishop's manner of guiding the flock, as not constraining them by force nor using violence in an active sense. And whether these words prove this or not, other scriptures, and the nature of the case, prove that bishops have no power of corporal force, but of ruling by God's word, and that none but volunteers are capable of church privileges, and communion, and pastoral conduct."—RICHARD BAXTER.

[2] Ἐπισκοποῦντες.

[3] Necessitas incumbit, 1 Cor. ix. 16. Sed hujus sensum absorbet lubentia. Id valet et in suscipiendo et in gerendo munere. Non sine reprehensione sunt pastores, qui, si res integra sit, mallent quidvis potius esse.—BENGEL.

ly to be effectual for answering their object, unless they proceed from a willing mind; unless, as the apostle expresses it in the epistle to Philemon, they are, "not as it were of necessity, but willingly." The duties of the eldership must be performed not "grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful" doer, as well as a cheerful "giver." [1] A christian elder, if he is what he should be, will be very thankful that God has given him a place in his house at all; and though sensible of the difficulties of his duties, and his unfitness for their right discharge, he will be still more grateful that he has been honored with office there. He will be disposed to adopt the apostle's words, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that he counted me trustworthy, faithful, putting me into the ministry." And with the psalmist, "What shall I render to the Lord for this benefit?" The spirit of the under shepherd should be that of the chief Shepherd, who, when called according to his covenant engagement to lay down his life for the sheep, was "not rebellious, neither turned away back," but said "Lo, I come;" "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!" [2] "There may be," as Archbishop Leighton says, "in a christian elder, very great reluctance in engaging and adhering to the work, from a sense of the excellence of it, and his unfitness; and the deep apprehension of those high interests, the glory of God and the salvation of souls; and yet he enters and continues in it with this willingness of mind, with most single and earnest desires of doing all he can for God and the flock of God; only grieved that there is in him so little suitableness of heart, so little holiness and acquaintance with God for enabling him to it; but might he find that, he were satisfied; and in attendance upon that, goes on and waits, and is doing according to his little skill and strength, and cannot leave it; is constrained indeed, but all the constraint is love to Jesus, and for the sake of the souls He hath bought; a constraint far different from the constraint here discharged; yea, indeed, that very willingness which is opposed to that other constraint."

§ 2. *"Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."*

Christian elders are to shepherd the flock, and superintend the family of God, not "for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;" as well as "not from constraint, but willingly." The former clause, as we have just seen, is equivalent to—not reluctantly, but cheerfully. This seems equivalent to, not in a self-interested, mercenary disposition, but in a disinterested spirit of gratitude to God and love to the brethren.

There is nothing wrong in a christian elder, who devotes his time and talents to the promotion of the good of the church over which he is placed, receiving, from the church's justice and gratitude, their sense of his claims on them, and their obligations to him, temporal support. It is the command of the apostle, "Let him who is taught, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." It is the ordination of our Lord, "that they who preach the gospel should live of

[1] Phil. 14. 2 Cor. ix. 7. [2] 1 Tim. i. 12. Isa. l. 5. Psal. cxvi. 12. xl. 7. Luke xii. 50.

the gospel," just as "they who ministered at the altar lived by the altar." "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who ploweth should plow in hope; and he that thrasheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"[1] These passages seem to refer to the teaching elder, whose whole attention is to be directed to reading and meditation in private, and to "word and doctrine," both publicly and from house to house; but it is plain that the elders who rule, if they are in circumstances in which they cannot devote the time necessary to the service of the church, without injustice to themselves and families, are equally entitled to support. This is implied in the injunction, "let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor," obviously not excluding the honor of voluntary support, "especially those who labor in word or in doctrine."

But while all this is true, it is not less true that the duties of christian elders must be performed "not for filthy lucre." No man must convert the christian eldership into a trade, in this way "making gain of godliness." Even with those elders who are entirely dependent on their labors, who have no source of income but the effect of the authority and grace of Christ on the minds, and consciences, and hearts of those to whom they minister, the principle must be, "freely we have received, freely we give." And wherever sacred duties are performed from a regard to worldly gain, in whatever form, whether in the form of fixed stipend, or occasional gifts, or increased respectability of character and worldly influence, leading to success in worldly business, there is fearful desecration. The apostle obviously lays much stress on this point. In his first Epistle to Timothy, iii. 3, he says, a bishop must "not be greedy of filthy lucre, nor covetous;" and in his Epistle to Titus i. 7, he repeats the declaration. Such repeated warnings were not more than the case required. There has been too much of this in every age of the church, and the evil is not unknown even in our own times; nor is it confined within the limits of richly endowed churches, where its existence, if not less criminal than elsewhere, is less wonderful. It is a most deplorable thing when a regard to secular interest is allowed to interfere either with the declaration of christian doctrine, or the administration of christian discipline; when professed christian teachers "prepare war against him that putteth not into their mouths,"[2] and "teach things that they ought not for filthy lucre's sake, through covetousness, with feigned words, making merchandize of their people, having hearts exercised to covetous practices, serving not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly;"[3] and when the rulers of the church, from secular considerations, prefer one before another, and do anything in the administration

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 7–11. [2] Micah. iii. 5. [3] Tit. i. 11. 2 Pet. 3, 14. Rom. xvi. 18.

of discipline by partiality; when "the watchmen are greedy dogs that can never have enough, all looking to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter;" and when Malachi's question is an appropriate one, "Who is there among you that would shut the doors for naught? neither do ye kindle the fire on my altar for naught?"[1] Balaam's resolution should be formed and kept, not only as it was by him in the letter, but as it was not by him, in the spirit. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Yet it is very delightful to perceive that so many of our ministers are men who, with the same talents, and education, and effort, might have secured for themselves far higher secular advantages than they possess, or ever can expect to possess, as christian elders. And the disinterestedness of many of our christian elders who rule, but do not labor in word and doctrine, in not only cheerfully giving their unpaid, and often ill-estimated labor to the churches, but, in addition, being patterns to the believers in liberally giving of their substance to promote the support and extension of the cause of Christ, makes it very evident that they shepherd the flock, that they superintend the family of God, "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." The christian elder, when he becomes old and gray-headed, should be able to say with Samuel, "Behold, here I am; witness against me before the Lord; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?" or with Paul, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold; I seek not yours, but you."[2]

Disinterestedness, in opposition to mercenariness, should characterize the labors of the christian elder. Regard to the Divine glory, gratitude for the Divine grace, love to the Saviour who died, and to those for whom he died, eager desire that his name may not be blasphemed, through the inconsistent conduct of those who are called by it, and that it may be glorified in the holiness and happiness of his blood-bought heritage, and in bringing down the people in subjection to him, making them willing in the day of his power; these are the principles which should preside in the mind and heart of the christian elder, and make him alert and cheerful in all the duties, however burdensome, of his official calling; producing a forwardness of mind far superior to what the stimulus of covetousness can create. Yes, as the good Archbishop says, "It is love, much love, which gives much unwearied care, and much skill in this charge. How sweet is it to him that loves to bestow himself, 'to spend and be spent,' upon his service whom he loves! Jacob, in the same kind of service, endured all, and found it light by reason of love, the cold of the nights and the heat of the days seven years for his Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days, because he loved her. Love is the great endowment of a shepherd of Christ's flock. He says not to Peter, art thou wise, or learned, or eloquent? but 'lovest thou me? lovest thou me? lovest thou me?' Art thou of a ready mind? 'Feed my sheep: feed my lambs.'"

[1] Isa. lvi. 11. Mal. i. 10.
[2] Numb. xxii. 18. 1 Sam. xii. 3. Acts xx. 33. 2 Cor. xii. 14.

§ 3.—*Not as lords of God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

Christian elders are to shepherd the flock, and oversee the children of God, "not as lords of God's heritage,[1] but being ensamples to the flock. These duties are to be performed not in a proud overbearing spirit. They are duties of *rule*, and therefore there is a temptation to pride in performing them. But the elders are to remember that, though they are rulers in, they are not lords over, the family of God. The Son alone is lord over his own house. We proclaim not ourselves lords, says the Apostle Paul; "we preach Jesus *the* Lord," the only Lord, the One Master and Proprietor. There were rulers in Israel; but Jehovah alone, in the highest sense of the word, was Israel's king. The soil was his, and so were the people. Of the spiritual Israel, Jehovah-Jesus is the proprietor and lord. He is Lord of all: he is our Lord, and we are all brethren. For the good of the whole, some of the brethren are called by him to rule under him, to administer his laws; but this lays no foundation for claiming to be lords of their faith. "The bride is the bridegroom's;" the church is the Lord's. The church does not belong to the elders, but the elders to the church. "All things are *yours*, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Diotrephes, who loved the pre-eminence, is the beacon, not the model, for christian elders.

The christian elder, even when he must "come with a rod," as but too often is necessary, should come "in love, and in the spirit of meekness." How beautifully did Paul, though in authority, and success, and gifts, "not behind the very chiefest of the apostles," exemplify his beloved brother Peter's precept? He did not conduct himself as a lord over God's heritage. He disowned all claim to personal lordship over their faith. He sought not glory, but, when he might have used authority as an apostle of Christ, was gentle among the disciples, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. And the servant of the Lord in every age must not be overbearing and ambitious: "he must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves." He must never forget the words of the Master, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."[2]

Instead of acting as if they were lords of God's heritage, christian elders are to perform their duties "as ensamples to the flock." In the careful discharge of their duty to those under their care, they are to teach them by example to perform the duties which they owe them and their Lord. By being dutiful to their people, they are to teach them to be dutiful to them. By being dutiful to Christ, they

[1] Presbyteri postea dominatum sumserunt. Unde ex *Seniore* factus est *Signore*, in Italia presertim.—BENGEL.

[2] Matt. xx. 25–28. Luke xxii. 25, 26. *Vide* Note A.

are to teach them to be obedient to him. And it deserves notice, that all the duties christian elders are called on officially to discharge, are duties which the christian brethren are substantially called on to perform. They are to "exhort one another daily while it is called to-day;" they are all of them to "look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God." And the graces, which are required in the christian life, are just those which must be manifested in the right discharge of pastoral duty.[1]

A christian elder cannot neglect duty, cannot commit sin of any kind, without doing more harm than a common church member; and no kind of neglect or fault is likely to exercise a more malignant influence, than those which refer to official obligations. The christian elder, therefore, should seek to be "an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; showing himself a pattern of good works." What a blessed influence is the holy character and conduct of christian elders calculated to diffuse through the church! In certain cases they should readily waive undoubted rights, that they may be the better able to give a needed example. They should imitate Paul: "Yourselves know," says he, to the Thessalonians, "how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for naught; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us."[2] How happy is it when they can say, "We beseech you be followers of us as dear children; be followers of us even as we also are of Christ!" After a christian elder has said to those under his care, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things," what a powerful enforcement is it to the exhortation, when the eloquence of a holy example, more persuasive than words, is felt in the heart of every hearer, saying, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you!"[3]

The two parts of the clause under remark throw light on each other. The elder who lords it over his brethren, is not, cannot be, "an *ensample*" to the flock. He is the very reverse of an ensample. He exemplifies the temper which they ought most carefully to avoid; and, on the other hand, if the elder acts as an ensample to the flock, he cannot lord it over them. The domineering elder cannot be an exemplary elder, and the exemplary elder cannot be a domineering elder. Nothing sits so gracefully on the ruler in the christian church as kind condescension. Nothing is more unbecoming in him than overbearing haughtiness. The Master is the great model. "Ye call

[1] "Ea debet esse Pastoris vita ut non solum quicquid loquitur, sed etiam quicquid agit, sit auditorum doctrina."—GERHARD. "Monstrosa res est gradus summus et animus infimus; sedes prima et vita ima; lingua magniloqua et vita otiosa; sermo multus et fructus nullus; vultus gravis et actus levis; ingens auctoritas et nutans stabilitas."—BERNARD.

[2] Acts xx. 34, 35. 2 Thess. iii. 7.

[3] Phil. iv. 8, 9.

me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If christian elders know these things, happy will it be for themselves and for the churches if they do them." [1]

Such is the temper in which the duties of christian elders should be performed, not reluctantly, but cheerfully; not mercenarily, but disinterestedly, from love to God and love to the brethren; not ambitiously, to display or establish superiority and rule, but humbly, for the purpose of setting an example of christian obedience;[2] not to glorify themselves but to edify the brethren.

CHAP. IV.—OF THE MOTIVES TO THESE DUTIES.

It still remains for us on this part of our subject to attend to the motives by which the apostle urges christian elders to discharge their duties in this manner. These motives are derived from considerations referring personally to the apostle—"I exhort you; I who am a fellow-elder, a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;" from considerations referring to the church—it is "the flock of God," "God's heritage;" and from considerations referring to the office-bearers themselves—if they perform their duties in this way, "when the chief Shepherd appears, they shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not." Let us shortly endeavor to bring out the force of the motives arising from these three sources.

§ 1.—*Motives suggested by the apostle's reference to himself.*

(1.) *He was also an elder.*

And first, let us consider the motives suggested by the apostle's reference to himself. "The elders who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed." I exhort, says Peter; and who was he? "An apostle of Jesus Christ," one of those so specially commissioned by Christ Jesus to act the part of ambassadors in his room, who is the great ambassador from God; as that when they exhorted it was "as though God did beseech men" by them; to whom he had said, "As the Father had sent me, so I send you; whatsoever ye bind on earth is bound in heaven; whatsoever ye loose on earth is loosed in heaven; he that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he who despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me;" to whom the Son of Man, on sitting down on the throne of his glory, gave twelve thrones, on which they should sit and

[1] John xiii. 13–17.

[2] "Tres sunt ministerii ecclesiastici pestes, ἀεργία, αἰσχροκερδεία et φιλοπρωτεία."—GERHARD.

judge, rule the twelve tribes of the spiritual Israel; who, along with the inspired prophets, are the foundation on which the church is built, and whose names are represented in the Apocalypse as engraved on the jewelled foundations of the New Jerusalem. An exhortation from such a quarter was equivalent to a command. He that rejected the apostles, "rejected not men, but God, who had given them his Spirit;" while they spoke as apostles, Christ, and God in Christ, spoke by them. An apostolical exhortation is equivalent to a Divine command.[1]

The apostles, though possessed of this authority, made no unnecessary display of it. It was generally acknowledged by the churches; and though they sometimes found it requisite to "command," as well as to exhort, in the name of the Lord Jesus, yet for the most part, "though they might be much bold in Christ" to enjoin that which was convenient, they "rather, for love's sake, besought" those whom they addressed. The injunction lost none of its intrinsic authority from the form it took; and, while more agreeable to him who gave, was not likely to be less influential on those to whom it was given. Peter not only uses the word exhort instead of command, but, instead of using the official appellation which was peculiar to the highest order of the church officers, apostle, he employs that of "elder," which in its most general acceptation includes all church rulers. He does not take the name which distinguishes him from, but that which identifies him with, those whom he addresses.

Peter speaks of "the wisdom given to his beloved brother Paul;" and it is plain he himself had been made partaker of the same spirit of wisdom and of love. 'I am,' says the venerable apostle, 'I am a co-presbyter, a fellow-elder. I know what it is to have a charge in the house of God. I have felt the responsibilities arising out of the command to feed the sheep, to feed the lambs of the great, good Shepherd. I know the duties of the christian pastor; I know his difficulties; I know his temptations; I know his joys; I know his sorrows. I know the heart of the christian elder. The exhortation comes from one who can, who does, thoroughly sympathize with you.'[2]

The kindly condescending address of the apostle was calculated to give additional force to his exhortation, and its peculiar form is surely intended to teach elders, especially old elders, men who have been long in office in God's church, to use the influence which, if they have in any measure rightly discharged their duty, they must have acquired, in exhorting their fellow-elders, especially those younger than themselves, to diligence and fidelity in the duties of their common offices. "The duty of mutual exhorting, which lies on each Christian to another, is little known amongst the greater part; but surely pastors should be, as in other duties so in this, eminent and exemplary in their intercourse and converse, saying often one to another, 'Oh, let us remember to what we are called, to how high and

[1] 2 Cor. v. 20. Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18. Matt. x. 40. John xiii. 20. Matt. xix. 28. Eph. ii. 20. Rev. xxi. 14.

[2] "Est autem eximia modestia, quod se *συμπρεσβύτερον*, ipse nominat, quem caput et principem apostolorum postea confinxerunt, et vicedeum adeo."—SEMLER.

heavy a charge! to what holiness and diligence! How great the hazard of our miscarriage, and how great the reward of our fidelity!' whetting and sharpening one another by those weighty and holy considerations." It is peculiarly becoming in old christian elders to say to their young brethren, especially when the exhortation is enforced by a protracted course of faithful services to Christ and his church, "Take heed to the ministry which ye have received of the Lord, that ye fulfil it." Such exhortations given in the right spirit seldom fail of doing good.

(2.) *He was a witness of the sufferings of Christ.*

To give further weight to his exhortation, the apostle not only calls himself a fellow-elder, but "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." "The sufferings of Christ," which the ancient prophets are in the first chapter (v. 11) represented as witnesses of, as testifying about, are not, as I endeavored to show when explaining that part of the epistle, the personal sufferings of our Lord, but the "sufferings until Christ," or "the sufferings in reference to Christ," as the words literally signify, "the sufferings of the present time," to which for a season it is needful that Christians be exposed, as contrasted with the glory which is to follow, the salvation laid up in heaven, the grace to be brought to Christians at the revelation of our Lord Jesus. And some have supposed that the phrase "sufferings of Christ" has the same meaning here, and that the apostle expresses the same sentiment as the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, when he says, "We told you before that we should suffer tribulation." There can be no doubt that Peter as well as Paul, when confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, did testify, that "through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom."[1] We find him doing so in this epistle, and this was in itself a good reason why he should exhort the office-bearers to a conscientious performance of their duties, for that, important at all times, becomes doubly so in a time of trial. But the expression here is not the same as that in the first chapter, and seems varied to show that it refers to Christ's personal sufferings, and not to the sufferings of his body, the church, till he comes.

Of these sufferings Peter was "a witness." These words may signify that the sufferings of Christ were a principal subject of Peter's testimony as an apostle. The apostles, after they received power through the Holy Ghost coming upon them, were, according to their Master's appointment and prediction, "witnesses unto him both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." And wherever they went, the cross was the great theme of their testimony, The Messiah they proclaimed was the crucified Messiah, "a stumbling-block to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks; but to the called, whether Jew or Greek, the power of God, the wisdom of God." Peter, judging of the ministry from his discourses recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and in this epistle, had, as well as Paul, "determined to know nothing among his con-

[1] Acts xiv. 22.

verts but Jesus Christ and him crucified." He, too, could say, "God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." [1]

It appears to me, however, more natural to understand the words, "a witness of the sufferings of Jesus Christ," in their most obvious sense as equivalent to, I saw Jesus Christ suffer. It is as if he had said, 'He who addresses you, and calls on you to be faithful to Christ, and to the church purchased by his blood, knows well how strong are his claims on *you*, how strong is his regard for *them*. With these eyes I have seen the Eternal Word, the Lord of Glory, a poor, destitute, afflicted, tormented, despised, dying, dead man. I heard his groans in Gethsemane. I saw his sweat, as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground. I saw him betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas. I saw him deserted by them all. I saw him insulted and abused before the high priest. I saw how deeply he felt, and how tenderly he forgave, my base denial of him.' And as we can scarcely persuade ourselves that Peter and the other apostles were not witnesses of the last scene of suffering, it is as if he said, 'I saw him affixed, like a felonious slave, to the cross. I heard the wail of agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" I heard, though I then understood it not, the mysterious parting cry, "It is finished." Having witnessed all this, is it wonderful that His words who thus suffered for me, for you, for the flock committed to our care, that his words, Lovest thou me? feed my lambs; Lovest thou me? feed my sheep; Lovest thou me? feed my sheep—should be continually sounding in my ears, continually weighing on my heart, and that I should with deep earnestness exhort you to do that which he so impressively commanded me to do?'

"These, indeed, are things that give great weight to a man's words, make them powerful and pressing, 'a witness of the sufferings of Christ.' The apostles had a singular advantage in this that they were eye-witnesses; [2] and Paul, who wanted that, had it supplied by a vision of Christ at his conversion. But certainly a spiritual view of Christ crucified is generally, I will not say absolutely, necessary to make a minister of Christ. It is certainly very requisite for the due witnessing of him, so to preach the gospel as one 'before whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified.' Men commonly read and hear, and may possibly preach, of the sufferings of Christ as a common story, and in that way it may a little move a man and wring tears from his eyes; but faith hath another kind of sight of them, and so works another kind of affection. By the eye of faith to see the only begotten Son of God, as stricken and smitten of God, bearing our sorrows and wounded for our transgressions; Jesus Christ, the righteous, reckoned among the unrighteous and malefactors; to see him stript naked, and scourged, and buffeted, and reviled, and dying, and all for us; this is the thing that will bind upon us most strongly all the duties of Christianity, and of our callings; and best enable us according to our callings to bind them upon others." [3]

[1] 1 Cor. i. 23. Gal. vi. 14. [2] Αὐτόπται. [3] Leighton.

(3.) *He was a partaker of the glory to be revealed.*

But still farther to add cogency to his exhortation, the apostle styles himself "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." The glory here spoken of is obviously "the glory of Christ," a state of dignity and happiness contrasted with his suffering state. 'I am not only a witness of his sufferings, but a partaker of his glory, which is to be revealed.' Some have supposed that in these words there is a reference either to our Lord's transfiguration, or to his resurrection state, as if Peter had said, 'I witnessed and shared of his sufferings, and I have witnessed and shared too of his glory. I was "with him in the Holy Mount, when he received from God the Father honor and glory." I, though fearing, entered with him into the cloud of glory, from the midst of which came the voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And I too companied with him after his resurrection, when God had "raised him from the dead and given him glory." I am one of those on whom he breathed and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and of whom he also said, "The glory thou hast given me I have given them." That glory is as yet in this state veiled. It is "hid with Christ in God," but it will by and by be manifested.'[1]

It seems to me more natural to consider the glory here referred to as the glory of Christ in the celestial state. That glory at present is concealed, and shall continue so till the close of the present state of things. The glories of the holy of holies are hidden from this outer court of the temple by the veil of these visible heavens, through which our Lord has passed. But this veil shall by and by be rent asunder, and all the splendors of the inner sanctuary burst on the sight of an amazed world. "Christ, the life of his people, shall appear,"[2] be manifested to be what he is, and they his people shall be manifested with him in glory. The day of his manifestation as the Son of God shall be the day of their manifestation as the sons of God. He shall be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;" and they shall be glorified in him, admired in him.[3] His glories shall be displayed; and it shall be made to appear that the glory his Father has given him he has given to his people.

Of this participation in the revealed glories of Christ, Peter was so persuaded in reference to himself, that he speaks of himself as already a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Having the spirit of faith, he was confident, "knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus would also raise up him by Jesus," and that he should be forever "with him where he is," beholding and sharing his glory, so far as the thing is possible, being "glorified together with him."[4] But the words are so chosen as, naturally enough, to convey, in addition to this thought, that he should be a partaker of the glory of Christ at the time of its revelation, the idea that even now, amid all the imperfections and sorrows of the present state, Peter considered himself as a partaker of the glory of Christ; that glory now concealed, but one day to be manifested. He considered himself as "planted together with Christ," not only "in the likeness of his death," but also

[1] 2 Pet. i. 16–18. John xvii. 22.
[2] φανερωθῇ.
[3] Col. iii. 4. 2 Thess. i. 10.
[4] 2 Cor. iv. 14. John xvii. 24. Rom. viii. 17.

"in the likeness of his resurrection;" as having fellowship with him not only in his death, but also in his life, "sitting with him, reigning with him, in the heavenly places;"[1] already a partaker, though in far inferior measure, of that holiness and happiness, in the enjoyment of the Divine favor and conformity to the Divine image, in the perfection of which Christ's glory consists. Peter was, and every Christian in the measure of his faith is, thus even here "a partaker of the glory which is to be revealed."

The bearing of this statement, as a motive on the apostle's exhortation, is manifest when you look forward to its close, where he points to the crown of glory, which, when the Chief Shepherd comes, that is, at the time of the revelation of his glory, shall be conferred on the faithful under-shepherds. The exhortation of a man, who, under the influence of the spirit of faith, believes, and therefore speaks, and who, when speaking of the future rewards of the faithful minister, speaks of something of which he has already the earnest, and of the full enjoyment of which he is completely assured, is plainly fitted to be peculiarly impressive and persuasive. It is as if he had said, "I speak what I do know. I testify what I have seen."

§ 2.—*Motives from considerations referring to the church.*

Let us now look at the motives derived from considerations referring to the church. Feed the church; it is the flock of God. Superintend the church; it is the heritage of God.

(1.) *It is the flock of God.*

The church is the flock of God, and every true member of it is one of his sheep. This is one of the figurative expressions by which Jehovah's peculiar property in, and care for, ancient Israel is often expressed. "Ye, my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God."[2] Like most expressions of the kind, it is employed in an extended and elevated sense to describe the peculiar relation in which the true spiritual church stands to God. They are his peculiar property, separated from the rest of mankind, saved from destruction by the good Shepherd laying down his life for them; protected by his peculiar providence, and blessed with the tokens of his special love. The good Shepherd, who laid down his life to save them from destruction, took it again to complete their salvation: "He gathers the lambs in his arms, he carries them in his bosom;" "He feeds them, and causes them to lie down. He seeks that which was lost, and brings again that which was driven away; and binds that which was broken, and strengthens that which is sick." Hear what he himself says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of my Father's hand."[3] Should not we count it a great honor, and feel it a most responsible trust, to have

[1] Rom. vi. 5. Eph. ii. 6.
[2] Ezek. xxxiv. 31.
[3] Isa. xl. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 11–14. John x. 28.

those who stand in so close a relation to God, in whom he takes so peculiar an interest, committed to our care? Should we not care for those for whom he cares? Should we not watch for those for whom his Son died?

(2.) *It is God's heritage.*

Substantially the same ideas with regard to the church are suggested by its being termed God's heritage. The term here used has a reference to the manner in which the Israelites obtained their possessions, which were heritages transmitted from generation to generation. It is borrowed from the fact that these possessions were originally fixed by lot, so that lot and possession are often, in Scripture, convertible terms. Like the former figure, it is often used to express Jehovah's peculiar relation to Israel, "The Lord's portion is his people; Israel is the lot of his inheritance;"[1] and both designations are transferred to the spiritual church under the new economy. Christians are called "the purchased possession," the peculiar property of God, "the chosen generation, the holy nation, the peculiar people."[2] To be employed to take care of his ancient people was a great honor. To be the king of Israel was greater honor than to be king of Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon. How far above all Pagan legislators stands Moses the servant of the Lord! How low the rank of heathen sages compared with that of Hebrew prophets! The most honorable and responsible situation man can occupy, is that of a teacher and ruler in that spiritual family of which God is the head, Jesus Christ is the elder brother, and holy angels the willing ministers. Should not God's most valued property be well cared for? Should not the education of his children be well attended to? Is there not great honor involved in the charge being intrusted to us? Must there not be high responsibility incurred by our undertaking it? Such seems the force of the motives derived from a reference to the church.

It is but right to remark, before leaving this particular, that the precise meaning of the expression, rendered "God's heritage," is somewhat doubtful. You will observe the word *God's* is in italics, which, as you know, indicates that there is no term answering to it in the original. The word is in the plural, the lots or possessions. Not lording it over "the lots."[3] The term lot or possession, in the singular, is applied to the church, as the lot or possession of Jehovah; but nowhere else in the plural. This has led some to suppose that it refers to the possessions, the property, of the church; not treating the church property, as if it were their own, as if they were the proprietors of it. There is no reason to think that at this early period the churches had anything like fixed property; and there is no proper contrast in this case between the two obviously antithetic clauses of the sentence. It is a much more probable opinion that considers the lots or possessions as referring to the separate flocks of different elders or elderships. Not lording it over the (or their) lots or possessions, the flocks allotted to them by the great Shepherd, but showing them an example. In this case, the motive folded up in the phrase

[1] Deut. xxxii. 9. [2] Eph. i. 18. 1 Pet. ii. 9. [3] See note B.

is, You have had a specific work assigned you by the great Shepherd. Each has his appointed sphere of labor. Let the laborers see that their own vineyard be well kept, and their own flock be well shepherded. Yet a little while, and the great Husbandman will take account of his servants, and then woe to the unprofitable, double woe to the unfaithful servant.

§ 3.—*Motives from considerations referring to the Office-bearers themselves.*

It only remains now that we attend a little to the motives derived from a reference to the office-bearers themselves. The words of the apostle express much; they suggest more. They describe the reward of the faithful christian elder; they dimly shadow forth the punishment of the unfaithful christian elder.

(1.) *The reward of the faithful christian elder.*

The words describe the reward of the faithful christian elder: "He shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away, when the chief Shepherd shall appear." Jesus Christ is the *chief* Shepherd; he is *the* Shepherd of the sheep, the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the proprietor Shepherd, whose own the sheep are; the Shepherd of the shepherds as well as of the sheep. He is even now really present in his church. The faithful Witness did not lie when he said, "Lo, I am with you alway." "Where two or three are met in my name, I am in the midst of them."[1]

His presence, however, is spiritual, not bodily. The heavens have received him, and we see him no more. But when he disappeared, the most explicit declarations were given that he should re-appear. "I will come again," said he himself; "and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "This same Jesus," said the angels to the apostles, when they stood gazing up towards heaven, in the clouds of which their Lord had just disappeared, "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."[2] This re-appearance, which is to be a glorious manifestation of what he is, both essentially and officially, a revelation of his glory, is a leading subject of the apostolic testimony, and has been all along the great object of the church's hope. Their "blessed hope" is, and has all along been, "the glorious appearing of Him who is the great God and their Saviour."[3] The day of his coming is to be the day of their "gathering together to him."

When He shall come, he shall come in his character of the chief Shepherd, to collect his flock together, and to conduct them all in a body into the heavenly fold. One purpose of his coming shall be to take account of his under-shepherds, and to render to them according to their work. To the faithful, laborious servant, who has affectionately and wisely shepherded and superintended, fed and guided, the flock committed to him, not grudgingly, but cheerfully; not merce-

[1] Matt. xxvii. 20; xviii. 20. [2] Acts i. 10, 11. [3] Tit. ii. 13.

narily, but disinterestedly; not ambitiously, seeking to be a lord, but humbly, striving to be an ensample; "he will then give a crown of glory which shall never fade."

The language is figurative, but the meaning is plain. He will visibly reward his faithful services, by bestowing on him a large measure of the highest kinds of happiness and honor of which his nature is capable; blessings which shall endure forever, and forever retain undiminished their power to satisfy their possessors. In what the peculiarity of the rewards of the faithful christian elder shall consist, we can form but inadequate and indistinct ideas. There is much, however, to lead us to believe, that a portion, and probably no small portion of it, is to consist in witnessing the holy happiness of those to whose spiritual interests he ministered on earth; and to know most certainly, that to his labors and instrumentality their happiness has been owing. Such is the view which the apostle's words naturally lead us to take, when he calls the Philippian Christians his "joy and his crown;" and when to the Thessalonians he says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and our joy." [1]

The christian pastor will, according to his measure, be admitted into the joy of his Lord, when he sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. This is an exceeding great, and a peculiarly appropriate reward; a reward which will be enjoyed just in proportion as the individual christian pastor has been filled with the spirit of his office, and discharged its duties. What a high, what a holy satisfaction to know, that we have efficiently co-operated towards the accomplishment of the favorite purpose of Deity, to reconcile all things to himself by Jesus Christ; that we have been the means of saving souls from death, of covering multitudes of sins, of increasing the joys of angels, of ministering to the satisfaction of Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood! What a reward!

To borrow the words of the holy Leighton, "It is a crown of glory, pure, unmixed glory, without any ingrediency of pride or sinful vanity, or any danger of it; and a crown that fadeth not, formed of such flowers that wither not; not a temporary garland of fading flowers, as all here are. Though made of flowers growing in a rich valley, their glorious beauty is fading; but this is fresh, and in perfect lustre, to all eternity. May they not well trample on base gain, and vain applause, that have this crown to look to? Joys of royal pomp, how soon do they vanish as a dream? But this day begins a triumph and a feast, that shall never either end or be wearied of. All things here, even the choicest pleasures, cloy, but satisfy not. Those above shall always satisfy, but never cloy. What is to be refused in the way to this crown? All labor for it is sweet. And what is there here to be desired to stay our hearts, that we should not most willingly let go, to rest from our labors, and receive our crown? Was ever any man sad that the day of his coronation drew nigh? In that day when he on whose head are many crowns, shall bestow many crowns, there

[1] Phil. iv. 1. 1 Thess. ii. 19.

will be no envy, no jealousies; all kings, each having his own crown, and each rejoicing in the glory of another, and all in His, who that day shall be all in all."

(2.) *The doom of the unfaithful christian elder.*

These words of the apostle, while they describe the final destiny of the faithful christian pastor, naturally suggest the awful truth respecting the christian elder who has not fed the flock of God, who has not superintended aright his heritage. What is to become of him who has done his work by constraint, not willingly, for filthy lucre, not of a willing mind, who has lorded it over God's heritage, and has not been an ensample to the flock; shall he be crowned? No; he has not "striven," or, at any rate, "not striven lawfully." The doom of the unprofitable, the doom of the unfaithful, servant will be his. Expelled from the family of God, he will be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. His portion is with the hypocrites, a class peculiarly hateful to him who desires truth in the inward part; with the perfidious, who have broken their engagements both to God and to man. And it is his fit place; for the honor of God, the cause of truth, the interests of souls, were put into his hands; he accepted the trust, and basely betrayed them all. In the prison of hell, with "the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, most underfoot and down-trodden vassals of perdition,"[1] must he have his everlasting abode? "This pertaineth to him as the portion of his cup." What christian elder can think of these things, can realize them to his mind, without having new nerve given to his resolution to be "faithful to him who has appointed him;" "faithful to death," that he may "obtain the crown of life," and escape the brand of everlasting shame and contempt; that he may be greeted with the invitation, "Well done, good and faithful servant," come up hither; instead of meeting the heart-withering denunciation, "Depart, depart, I never knew you." You called me, Lord; but I never considered you as my servant, for I knew you were not.

Thus have I brought to a close my illustrations of the first part of this paragraph, that part of it which refers to the duties of the office-bearers of the christian church to those committed to their care. But ere proceeding farther, I would press on my own mind, and on the minds of my brethren in the eldership in this congregation, the solemn considerations which, in the illustration of this passage of Scripture, have been placed before us. Let us remember, that this word of exhortation is as really addressed to us, as it was to those to whom the epistle was originally written. Let us humble ourselves, under the consciousness how very imperfectly we have discharged the inestimably important duties of our most responsible situation. Let us cast ourselves on our Master's kindness, for the forgiveness of all that has been wanting and wrong in our official conduct; and while in our inmost hearts saying, "Who is sufficient for these things?" let us, undiscouraged though not unwarned by our former failures, cherish an overgrowing resoluteness of determination, by his grace, to be

[1] Milton.

"steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of our Lord," assured that our labors shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Holy brethren, partakers of this high vocation, elders, suffer the words of exhortation from one who also is an elder. They shall be the words of the holy apostles of our common Lord: "I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that ye take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. Hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. Be examples to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Let no man despise you. O men of God, flee pride, strife, evil surmisings, perverse disputings, and that love of money which is the root of all evil. Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life. Hold fast the form of sound words. Hold fast what you have attained; let no man take your crown. I give you charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that you observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, neither can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen." [1]

II.—OF THE DUTIES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO THEIR OFFICE-BEARERS.

I go on now to call your attention to the view which the text gives us of the duties of the members of christian churches towards their office-bearers. This is contained in the first clause of the fifth verse, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder." Before proceeding farther, however, it will be proper that I endeavor to satisfy you that these words are, indeed, an injunction of the duties of church-members to their office-bearers, and not, as many have supposed, of the duties of the young to the aged. Were we merely looking at the words, without taking into consideration the connection in which they are introduced, this last mode of viewing them would probably be that which would first occur to every reader; but it requires only a little reflection to see: first, that the connection by no means leads us to expect here an injunction of the duties of the young to the aged, and that the language by no means obliges us thus to understand it; and, secondly, that the connection does lead us to expect an injunction of the duties of the private members of the church, as contra-distinguished from the office-bearers; and, still farther, that while there is nothing in the language which is inconsistent with this mode of interpretation, there is something which cannot be satisfactorily explained on any other supposition.

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 1. Acts xx. 28. 1 Tim. i. 19; iii. 9; iv. 12. Tit. ii 15. 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12. 2 Tim. i. 13. Rev. iii. 11. 1 Tim. vi. 13–16.

There can be no doubt that the first four verses of the chapter refer to the duties of christian office-bearers; and as little, that the injunction in the fifth verse has a close connection with the injunctions contained in these verses, a connection intimated by the connective particle "likewise;" [1] a word which seems to intimate that the duties enjoined are correlative, or, at any rate, belong to the same general family of duties. In enjoining domestic duties, after stating the duties of servants, the apostle says, "*Likewise*, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;" and after stating the duties of wives, he says, "*Likewise*, ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered." [2] The word certainly leads you to expect the injunction of some kindred, some ecclesiastical, duty, not the injunction of a duty belonging to an entirely different class.

It is the ordinary practice of the apostles, a practice plainly dictated by the proprieties of the case, to enjoin the duties rising out of mutual relations in succession; thus, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands; husbands, love your wives." "Children, obey your parents; fathers, provoke not your children to anger." "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters; masters, do the same thing to them." [3] When, therefore, we meet with an injunction to elders to do their duty to a certain class clearly defined, and then find a certain class, not quite so clearly defined, called on to do their duty to elders, we naturally conclude that the objects of the first exhortations are the subjects of the second, and not some other class altogether.

Had the office-bearers been represented as spiritual fathers, and had the injunction run thus, 'Fathers in Christ, carefully superintend and instruct the family of God committed to your care;' and been followed by the command, 'Likewise, ye children, be submissive to the fathers;' would not every one at once have seen that, in the latter clause, it was not the duty of children to their parents that was enjoined, but that of spiritual children to their spiritual fathers —or in other words, of the members of the church to the office-bearers of the church?

It seems very unnatural, without a strong reason, to suppose the elders of the fifth verse to be a different class of men from the elders of the first verse; [4] and, if they are the same class, it seems strange that young persons alone should be called on to perform to them a duty which is owing to them by all to whom they stand in official relation. Besides, had the apostle meant to enjoin the duties of the young to the old, he would have used some other word for the old than that which he had just used to express office. Still further, the duty enjoined is one due to all official elders, from their office; and not due to any old man, merely from his age. It is not submission, but respect, that is due from the young to the old. "Thou shalt rise

[1] Ὁμοίως manifeste ostendit eosdem hic significari presbyteros: sicut antea Petrus de presbyterorum erga suas oves, sic nunc de ovium erga suos πρεσβῦτερος officio disserit: quamobrem etiam recte Syrus interpres addidit affixum *vestris*.—BEZA.

[2] 1 Pet. iii. 1, 7. [3] Eph. v. 22, 25; vi. 1, 4, 5, 9. Col. iii. 18–22; iv. 1.

[4] Πρεσβύτεροι.

up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord."[1]

We consider ourselves, then, as not only warranted, but shut up, to interpret "the younger," or the juniors here, as a general name for the ordinary church members, as contra-distinguished from their elders, in the same way as they are termed sheep, or a flock, when their office-bearers are termed shepherds; scholars, or disciples, when they are termed teachers; and as John the elder speaks of his converts as his children, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."[2] I am not aware of the designation "younger" being used in any other part of the New Testament in the sense which it seems to bear here, though there is a passage where it is employed in a somewhat analogous way: "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."[3]

That the younger here are those who stand in some relation to the presbyters or elders just mentioned, is so evident, and its reference to the young in age is so unnatural,[4] that we find a number of commentators supposing that the term refers to the six inferior orders of clergy,[5] as they were called, after the simplicity of the primitive christian polity was departed from; and that submission referred to their duties to the bishops. The use of such an expression for church members was natural in the primitive times, when their official elders were generally not young men, certainly not young Christians; it being matter of statute that the elders should not be novices, but tried men, old disciples; so that the great body of the church members were both naturally and spiritually their juniors. Indeed still, in ordinary cases, the great body of the members of a church are younger than their elders.

On the supposition that the younger, the juniors, are the private members of the church, the whole passage has a character of close connection and complete consistency. We have first the duties of the office-bearers; then the duty of the private members of the church to their office-bearers; and then the duty of all connected with the church, whether officers or private members, clearly stated and powerfully enforced. The duties enjoined are just the duties belonging to those who respectively occupy those ecclesiastical relations. On the other supposition all is disjointed. An injunction of the duties of christian pastors is followed by an injunction of the duties of the young to the old; and this followed by an injunction of the duty which every man owes to every man; and the duties enjoined in the two last cases are not those which we expect; for, though the young are bound to respect the aged, they are not bound to submit to them; and, though every man is to be kind and just to every other man, every man is not bound to be subject to every man; though there is an important sense, in which every christian man should be subject to every other christian man; every church member to every other church member. Even Leighton, who follows the common mode of interpretation, acknowledges that the words have

[1] Lev. xix. 32. [2] 3 John 4. [3] Luke xxii. 26.
[4] See note C. [5] Salmeron.

"some aspect to the relation of those that are under the discipline and government of the elders." The good archbishop was forgetful of the wise saying of Dr. Owen: "If Scripture have more meanings than one, it has no meaning at all." If the younger means the members of the church, it cannot mean the young properly so called.

Having thus ascertained that the injunction before us is an injunction to church members to perform their duty to their office-bearers, let us proceed now to inquire into the meaning of the injunction. What is the duty of church members to their office-bearers, as here described? The duty here enjoined is substantially the same as that enjoined by the Apostle Paul, in his Epistles to the Thessalonians and Hebrews. "We beseech you, brethren, to know, or acknowledge, them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they who must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." [1]

It is quite plain, from these passages, that obedience and submission are required from church members to their office-bearers. It is unhappily too certain, that much mischief has been done, and much good prevented, by church officers assuming a power and authority that do not belong to them, but to the one Lord, and encroaching on the liberties which every Christian possesses in unalienable right, by virtue of the gift of this one Lord; and by church members impiously permitting such an usurpation, and tamely submitting to such encroachments on their privileges. But it is just as unhappily notorious, that much mischief has been done, and much good prevented, in the christian church, by anarchy as well as tyranny: by church members refusing to obey them that are over them in the Lord, and by church officers allowing themselves to be denuded of the authority with which their Master has clothed them, and without the exercise of which the great and salutary ends of their office cannot be gained.

A christian church is a very free society; but they mistake the matter who consider it as a democracy. It is a monarchy, administered by inferior magistrates, chosen by their fellow-subjects, who are to execute the King's laws, being guided solely by his word, and neither by their own judgment or caprice, nor by the opinions and will of those whom they govern. Christ is the Lord, and he administers his government by officers appointed according to his ordinance, and regulated by his laws. It is of great importance, both to the office-bearers and private members of a christian church, that they have distinct scriptural views on this subject, that the former may not exact what they have no right to, and that the latter may not refuse what, by the law of Christ, they are bound to give.

It is an elementary principle in the christian polity, that the office-bearers of every christian church should be chosen by the members of that church. No man should become an office-bearer in the christian church, but thus by the suffrage of his brethren: and every individual, in joining a christian church which has office-bearers, by

[1] 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17.

doing so chooses them as his ecclesiastical superiors. Pastors and teachers are Christ's gifts.[1] The Holy Ghost constitutes all true ecclesiastical overseers;[2] but he does this, not by miraculous interposition, but by endowing them with the suitable qualifications, and inclining their brethren to call them to the exercise of these gifts. The primitive church elected their own officers. The apostles ordained them, but those ordained by them were chosen by the brethren.[3]

The power of election was with them, and continued to be so, till the church became so corrupted as scarcely to deserve the name. So important is this consideration, in my apprehension, that I could not plead for obedience or submission as an ecclesiastical duty from christian men in their social capacity, to a person imposed on them from without, either by civil or ecclesiastical authority. Non-intrusion is the fundamental principle of the administrative polity of the christian church. Where a man, claiming rightly or wrongly the character of an elder in Christ's church, is not chosen explicitly or implicitly by me to be over me in the Lord, I am not bound to submit to him as my pastor.

Even to those elders whom the members of a church have explicitly or implicitly chosen to be their elders, the obedience due is obedience within certain clearly defined limits. It is only in the discharge of the duties of their office that they are to be submitted to; and even in the discharge of these duties, they are to be submitted to only as far as they administer the law of the one Lord. It is not to the arbitrary will of your elders that you are bound to submit. It is to them declaring and executing the will of Christ.[4] "Pastors" (that is, elders) says Mr. Fuller, "are that to a church which the executive powers or magistrates of a free country are to the people at large; the organs of the law. Submission to them is submission to the law." If elders teach doctrine inconsistent with the doctrine of Christ, or enjoin anything inconsistent with his law, they are not to be submitted to, but on the contrary opposed; opposed to the face, for they are to be blamed. But when the christian eldership keep themselves within the proper bounds of their office, it is the duty of all private members of the society to submit to and obey them; and they cannot do otherwise without disturbing the peace of the society, interfering with the edification both of themselves and of their fellow church members, and drawing down upon themselves that disapprobation with which the one Lord, who is the Author of order and not confusion, must regard all who resist his ordinances.

The truth on the subject of church authority has never been better stated than by the learned and judicious Dr. Owen: "The obedience due to church rulers is not a blind, implicit obedience. A pretence hereof has been abused to the ruin of the souls of men; but there is nothing more contrary to the whole nature of gospel obedience, which is our reasonable service. It has respect unto them

[1] Eph. iv. 11. [2] Acts xx. 28. [3] Acts vi. 3, 4.

[4] "This power" (the power given to church officers) "is wholly ministerial, without domination,—without coaction: and, therefore, one of the requisites of a bishop is—"he must be no striker:" he has no arms put into his hands for this purpose; the ecclesiastical state being furnished "auctoritate suadendi magis quam jubendi potestate."—JER. TAYLOR, *Ductor Dubitantium.*

in their office only, and while they teach the things which the Lord Christ hath appointed them to teach; when they depart from these, there is neither obedience nor submission due to them. Wherefore, in the performance of these duties, there is supposed a judgment to be made of what is enjoined or taught by the word of God. Our obedience unto them must be obedience to God. On these suppositions their word is to be obeyed, and their rule submitted to, not only because they are true and right materially, but also because they are theirs, and conveyed from them unto us by Divine institution."[1]

Keeping these general remarks in view, let us proceed to consider a little more particularly what is included in that submissive obedience which the christian people, according to the law of the Lord, owe to the office-bearers whom they themselves have chosen. And here, with a reference to the view taken of the official duties of the eldership in a former part of this discourse, I shall show, in succession, how the members of the church are to submit themselves to the elders teaching, and to the elders superintending or governing. But before entering on this illustration, I have to solicit your attention, for a moment, to two things which may be considered as necessary prerequisites, in order to any individual rightly discharging his duty to the eldership, in either of these aspects. These are, first, a reverence for church government as an ordinance of Christ; and secondly, a respect for the persons who, in the church of which the individual is a member, are invested with office.

§ 1.—*Preliminary requisites to the discharge of the duty of subjection to Elders.*

(1.) *Conviction of the Divine authority of church order.*

To fit a man for the right discharge of the duty here enjoined, it is not necessary that he should be persuaded that every arrangement in the church with which he is connected is of Divine authority; but it is of great importance that he should be persuaded that the christian church is a divine, not a human, institution; and that its office-bearers, properly chosen, are authorized by its Divine Head to execute his laws, and administer his ordinances. Without such a conviction, ecclesiastical obedience, as a religious duty, is impossible. The individual may comply with the arrangements as expedient, but he must feel himself at liberty, whenever he thinks them inexpedient, which is nearly equivalent to whenever he feels them to be inconvenient, to decline compliance with them. A christian church is a voluntary society, inasmuch as no man can lawfully be compelled either to enter into its fellowship or to continue in it; but it is not a voluntary society, either in the sense that a christian man can, without impropriety, continue unconnected with it; or, having connected himself with it, is not bound to submit to the laws of its Lord and King, administered by office-bearers appointed according to his revealed will.

[1] Owen on the Hebrews.—Vol. iv. p. 260. Fol. ed.

A great deal of the insubordination which prevails in christian churches originates in the want of just views and settled convictions on this point. It is certainly true of ecclesiastical government in a higher sense than of civil government, that it is "of God;" and that "he who resists it," in the performance of its legitimate functions, "resists the ordinance of God, and receives to himself condemnation;" and this holds good, whatever form ecclesiastical government may assume, provided only the rights of Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church, and the privileges of his people, the members of it, are secured.

(2.) *Personal respect for those invested with office.*

Inferior in importance to this, but only inferior to it, is the second pre-requisite to the right discharge of the duty of submission or obedience to church officers: A personal respect for the individuals invested with office. To discharge the duties of civil obedience without this, is difficult. Without this, to discharge the duties of ecclesiastical obedience is impossible. No man ought to become a member of a church where the office-bearers, as a body, do not command his respect for their personal qualifications. He sports with his own edification if he does so. Nor ought he to continue a member of a church, where, as a body, they forfeit their claims on his respect. This is obvious; for how, in this case, can he have christian fellowship with them?

In churches, in any good measure rightly constituted, the office-bearers are likely to be men worthy of esteem for their own sake, as well as for their work's sake. If they are not it must reflect much discredit on those who placed them in a situation so prominent and so responsible; a station which men of low christian attainments, and doubtful spiritual character, cannot occupy without dishonor to Christianity, and injury to the edification of the church. This consideration ought to have a powerful effect on the minds of church members in electing office-bearers, and of Christians fixing on a particular religious society with which permanently to connect themselves. They ought to see to it that the elders of the church they belong to, be such men as that nothing in their private character and deportment shall throw obstacles in the way of the discharge of the duty due to them as public officers; but that, on the contrary, the respect which they cannot but feel for their worth as christian brethren, shall make it a very easy thing to render to them the honor and submission due to them as christian elders.

§ 2.—*Subjection to the elders as teachers.*

Let me now a little more particularly consider what this honor and submission is, in reference to the two great departments of the elders' official duty, explained in a former part of this discourse: Teaching and superintendence. And first, of the submission which church members owe to their elders as teachers. Now, church members are certainly not bound to believe everything their elders teach, nor to do everything they enjoin; nay, they are not bound to believe any-

thing they teach, merely because they teach it; to do anything they enjoin, merely because they enjoin it. But they are bound to submit to their teaching, both by regularly and conscientiously waiting on their instructions, and by receiving these instructions in the candid, humble spirit of discipleship.

Attendance on, and attention to, his teaching, is what every christian teaching elder is entitled to from those under his care. It is the duty of the christian teacher to "wait on his teaching."[1] The christian teaching elder, who, without a very sufficient reason, is not in his own place when the church assembles to observe the ordinances of Christ, among which attention to the doctrine of the apostles is one of the most important, is in fault. He ought to be there, prepared to expound and enforce the doctrine and law of the Lord, like a householder with a well-furnished store, out of which he is ready to distribute things new and old, "to give to each of the household his portion in due season." But the same authority which requires the elders to be present to teach, requires the brethren to be present to be taught. The pulpit must not only be filled, but in every case where there is not a sufficient reason for absence, filled by its proper occupant; and so ought the pew. Regular attendance on the public instructions of the teaching elders is the fundamental part of submission to them. If you do not hear your own elders, how can you be taught by them so as to be "obedient to them in the Lord?" And it is of importance that there should be attendance at the hour as well as on the day of public instruction. Punctuality as well as regularity should be attended to. It should be said of every christian assembly as of Peter's congregation in the house of Cornelius, when the minister rises to address them, "They are *all* present before God, to hear all things that are commanded him of God."[2]

The remark respecting attendance on the instruction of the elders, applies not only to their public teaching, but also to their ministrations from house to house. It is obviously the duty of the church members, so far as it is practicable, to afford the elders an opportunity of giving them those instructions more appropriate to their individual character and circumstances, which it would be unsuitable to communicate in public addresses.

But there must be attention as well as attendance; church members must show their submission to their elders' teaching, not only by a regular personal waiting on their instructions, but also by giving them the ready attention and the respectful consideration they deserve. They are to listen, and to listen not in the temper of captious critics, but of humble docile disciples; as persons who are come to learn the doctrine and law of the Lord, and who consider the teaching eldership as his appointed ordinance for bringing and keeping this doctrine and law before their mind. It is one of the many advantages of a stated ministry, that they who have placed themselves under it, are in a great measure freed from temptation to indulge in that critical mode of hearing, in which the hearer acts the part rather of the judge than of the disciple; seeking to form an opinion respecting the powers of the mind, the orthodoxy of the doctrine, or the qualities

[1] Rom. xii. 7. [2] Acts x. 33.

of the style and manner of the preacher, rather than to derive spiritual improvement. The church member, in listening to the teacher whom he has chosen, with whose character and qualifications he is satisfied, with whose style and manner he is familiar, is, no doubt, to judge of the accordance of what he hears with the Divine infallible exhibition of the doctrine and law of Christ, like one whose spiritual senses are exercised to discern good and evil; but he is to come, expecting to hear nothing reprehensible, disposed to give a candid consideration to everything that is said, anxious to hear what God the Lord will say to him, and expecting to hear this through the medium of his own elders, the instructors of his own unbiassed choice, the divinely-appointed organs of instruction, and determined to "receive with meekness the word," which, if "engrafted" into him, will indeed "save his soul."

Instead of taking offence when the elder in teaching comes very close to his conscience, the church member should readily and thankfully receive "the reproof" which gives "wisdom;" and, instead of rising in inward rebellion against the preacher, should accept the warning and rebuke which through his instrumentality is administered by his Master and ours. The church member who treats the instructions of the elders in an opposite spirit, violates the law in the text, forgets his place in the body of Christ, and throws almost invincible obstacles in the way of their usefulness, and his own edification. It is a just observation of Mr. Fuller, "If men attend preaching merely as judges of its orthodoxy, they will receive no advantage to themselves, and may do much harm to others. It is the humble Christian who hears that he may be instructed, corrected, and quickened in the ways of God, who will obtain that consolation which the gospel affords."

§ 3.—*Submission to the elders as superintendents.*

It only remains now that we say a few words on the duty of submission due by church members to their elders as superintendents, as those who are "over them in the Lord," who "have the oversight of them," who "have the rule over them." And here I will, first, attend to the submission which is due to the eldership in their corporate capacity, and then to that which is due to individual elders when performing their duties as superintendents.

(1.) *Submission to the eldership as a body.*

Submission to the eldership as a body, or to the session, as we call that body, has a reference to the two great functions that body has to perform: the preservation of external order in the society, and the exercise of spiritual discipline in the society. It is plain that in such a society as a christian church, there are certain arrangements with respect to the time and place of meeting, and the order and minor circumstances of the services, that must be made and attended to. It belongs to the eldership to make such regulations, and it is the duty of the members of the church to observe them. These arrangements may not in every case seem to individual members to be the best;

they may not be the best. It is quite right in private members to suggest to the elders what they think would be an improvement; but it is for the elders to judge of such things; and their judgment, in every case where conscience is not concerned, should be submitted to. If this be not attended to, there can be no such thing as order in a church.

The other form of submission to the eldership, submission to them as the administrators of the discipline of the society, requires somewhat more extended illustration. The admission of members into the body, the dealing with such members as have violated the laws of the society, and the exclusion of obstinate offenders from the society, are important official duties of the eldership. In the right discharge of these functions, the members of the society have a deep interest, and every member of the church should show that he is aware of this. The province of the members is not, however, directly to do these things; but to furnish, where they have it in their power, the means to the eldership to do them to the best advantage. It is their duty, when they are aware that individuals are applying for admission into the society, to give their elders any information which may help them to a right decision in a question of vital importance to the body; and in the same way, when offences occur, after having used in vain the means appointed by our Lord (Matt. xviii.) for having them removed privately, to bring the subject before the assembly of the eldership, and to give them all the assistance in their power to have it properly disposed of. Every member of a church is bound "to look diligently lest any fellow church member fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble the body, and many be defiled."[1]

In the decisions of the eldership, as to admission, discipline, and exclusion, it is the duty of the members of the church to acquiesce, except in cases where they have satisfactory evidence that the law of Christ has not been rightly administered; and even where they may suppose that this has been the case, they are not to take it on them to judge and condemn those whom they themselves have elected to judge in such matters; far less are they to blazon their view of the matter before the church, least of all before the world. They are respectfully to remonstrate with the eldership, and, if they cannot obtain satisfaction, they are to apply to those larger associations of elders, which, under the name of presbyteries and synods, our church polity, in harmony, as we think, with the great leading principles of order laid down in the New Testament, provides; and if even then they cannot obtain satisfaction, if the matter is of such importance as to require it, after giving testimony against what they consider as a violation of the law of Christ, they should peaceably retire from the society. For private members of the church to counterwork the eldership in the legitimate discharge of their functions; to attempt, by producing popular commotions, to overawe their deliberations, or interfere with and overthrow their judgments, is plainly inconsistent with everything like good order, and directly opposed to that submission here enjoined by the supreme authority in the church.

[1] Heb. xii. 15.

Before leaving this part of the subject, I must say a word or two as to the duty of submission which a member of the church owes to the eldership when he himself unhappily becomes a subject of discipline. Such a person, though innocent, may, through mistake, or even through malignity, be regularly brought before the session as an accused person. In such circumstances, the individual concerned is not to refuse to submit the case to trial. He is not to behave as if he thought the eldership were acting an unkind part to him, in doing what they are imperatively bound to do, to examine every question connected with the purity of the body, regularly brought before them; he is to furnish them with the means of vindicating his character and that of the body, if he has been unjustly accused; and if he have really committed a fault, he is readily to acknowledge it, not carping at every mistake that may have been committed either by his accusers or judges, but by confession, penitence, and reformation, putting it in the power of the elders, with as little delay as possible, to restore him.

It is a very hazardous thing for offending members of a church not to submit themselves to their elders, when, in the impartial administration of the wise and benignant law of Christ, they are endeavouring to heal their backslidings, and wipe off the stain their conduct has cast on the worthy name, and remove the stumbling-block it has cast before both the church and the world. It is no light matter to set at naught the authority of an assembly of elders met in the name of Christ, and intelligently and honestly administering his laws. A deeper solemnity hangs over such an assembly, however humble in worldly ranks may be its members, than over the highest court which refers merely to the affairs of this world. He that despiseth them, despiseth their Lord; and he who despiseth him, despiseth also him who sent him.

(2.) *Submission to the elders as individuals.*

A very few remarks on the duty of submission due from the church members to the individual elder, in discharging his function of superintendence, shall conclude these discussions. It is the duty of the elder to watch for the souls of those placed under his more immediate superintendence, to see that those duties on which their church membership is suspended be carefully performed. I refer to such duties as attendance on public worship, the religious government and education of their families, the maintenance of family worship, &c. It is also their duty to see that they be generally acting as becometh saints; walking so as to please God, and adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

To enable himself to perform these duties, the elder must seek a more intimate acquaintance with those under his care, than the mere common intercourse of society can give; and must make inquiries which, from a stranger, would be justly counted intrusive and impertinent. The inquiries of the elder should be kindly taken, as originating in a desire to preserve a good conscience to himself, and to promote the highest interests both of the individual and of the so-

ciety. And when he finds it necessary to exhort, and warn, and even rebuke privately, all this proceeding from a regard to Christ's law, and being, indeed, but an execution of it, is to be met in a becoming spirit, not submitted to as a hardship, but received as a privilege. The proper discharge of these private duties of the elder, and the meeting them in a right spirit, would mightily promote the edification of the body, and most happily lighten the disciplinary labors of the eldership.

"It has long appeared to me," says that wise and good man Andrew Fuller, "that there are some species of faults in church members, which are not proper objects of church censure, but of private pastoral admonition" by the elders; "such as spiritual declension, hesitation on important truth, occasional neglect of religious duties, worldly anxieties, and the early approaches to any evil course. A faithful elder,[1] with an eye of watchful tenderness, will perceive the first symptoms of spiritual disorder, and by a timely hint will counteract its operations." The church member may be aware that this is very self-denying work to the elder, who would much rather visit him with the smile of affectionate congratulation than with a countenance which says, 'My child, I stand in doubt of you.' And they ought not to render that disagreeable but important part of his work more disagreeable, by manifesting an irritable and resentful disposition, but receive the warning and the reproof which christian love dictates, and which christian law requires, with candor, and even with gratitude. "Correction may be grievous to him that forsaketh the way, but he that hateth reproof shall die."[2]

Such is a short view of the duty of church members to their office-bearers, as here enjoined by the apostle. It is indeed what Archbishop Leighton terms it, just "the obedience due to the discipline of God's house. This is all we plead for on this point. And know, if you refuse it, and despise the ordinance of God, he will resent the indignity as done to him. And oh, that all that have that charge of his house upon them would mind his interest wholly, and not rise in conceit of their power, but wholly employ and improve it for their Lord and Master; and look on no respect to themselves, as for themselves desirable, but only so far as is needful for the profitable discharge and advances of the work in their hands. What are the differences and regards of men? How empty a vapor! and whatsoever it is, nothing is lost by single and entire love of our Lord's glory, and total aiming at that. Them that honor him He will honor, and those that despise Him shall be despised."

I shall conclude this part of the subject by briefly illustrating the argument by which the apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, enforces compliance with an injunction of parallel meaning. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."[3] Think of the work in which they are engaged; think of the character which they bear in performing it; think of the effect which your obedience

[1] Pastor is Mr. F.'s word; but, we have seen, pastor and elder are synonymous.
[2] Prov. xv. 10.
[3] Heb. xiii. 17.

or disobedience will have on the manner in which this work will be performed; and think of the influence which the manner in which their work is performed will have on your own interests.

Think of the work of your elders. They watch, they watch for you, they watch for your souls. They watch; their work requires constant solicitude; they must be ever on the alert, to observe danger and to prevent evil. They watch for you. Your best interests are the object of their solicitude. They are not watching for their own emolument or fame, but for your happiness. Others are watching against you; they are watching for you. Satan is watching you as a wolf the sheep-fold, to steal and to destroy. Your elders watch, as faithful shepherds, to protect and save you. The world is watching you with a malignant eye, waiting for your halting. Your elders are watching, with the solicitude of parents, to keep you from falling. They watch for your souls—for that which is, of all you possess, most precious. Surely those who are benevolently engaged in a work so full of solicitude, and labor to promote your highest interests should not be counteracted by you, as they will be if you be not subject to them in the Lord.

Then think of the character they bear in doing this work. They watch as they who must give account. They are commissioned and responsible. What they do, they do by the authority of him who has appointed them. Do not resist them in their proper work, as you would not offend Him; and remembering that they must give account to him, recollecting what a stake they have in the matter, do not wonder that they should hazard offending you by the discharge of their duty, rather than run the risk of being ashamed before him at his coming, as they must be if they act not the part of faithful watchmen.

Consider, still further, the effect which your submission, or non-submission, is likely to have on their discharge of their work. If you do not submit yourselves, they will perform their work with grief. There are few bitterer sorrows than that of a faithful elder, laboring among a people who counteract his attempts to promote their spiritual improvement. Even Moses, one of "the elders, who by faith received a good report," when the Israelitish people were disobedient and rebellious, was tempted to wish that God would kill him out of hand rather than continue to cause him to see his wretchedness.[1] Slothful, selfish, cold-hearted, cavilling, conceited, contentious congregations, have broken the spirit of many a faithful minister of Christ, and made him go mourning to the grave.

And if you do submit yourselves, they will perform their work with joy. They will have a holy satisfaction in it. Their work will be their reward. Their hearts will be lifted up in the ways of the Lord. The joy of the Lord will be their strength. All good christian elders can say with John the elder, "We have no greater joy than to see our children walk in truth."

And then, finally, think of the influence which the manner in which the work is performed will have on your own interests. If it is performed with grief, that will be unprofitable for you. The labors of a

[1] Num. xi. 15.

disheartened spiritual teacher or superintendent are not likely to be effective. Even where there is the highest degree of spiritual holy principle, the hands will wax feeble when the heart is discouraged; and the blessing of the great Master is not likely to be imparted when his commands are disregarded, and his servants misused. On the other hand, if your elder's work is performed with joy, it will be profitable to you. He will be enabled to do all his work in the most satisfactory way. His best affections will be strongly drawn out to those who rightly estimate his labors, and show a regard to the law of the Lord; and he will pray for you, and preach to you with double fervor and impressiveness. Seeing of the travail of his Master's soul, and of his own, he will be satisfied; and he will become more and more desirous that those in whom the good work is going forward, under his instrumentality, may grow in all holy attainments; he will become ingenious in devising, and unwearied in executing, plans for their spiritual improvement; and the great Head of the church, regarding with a benignant smile the affectionate laborious eldership, and the docile obedient church, will pour out on them in rich abundance of the selectest influences of his grace, and bless them, and make them blessings. Happy elders! Happy church! In their experience is verified the ancient oracle, "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rere-ward. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." [1]

III.—OF THE DUTY WHICH ALL IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH OWE TO EACH OTHER, "MUTUAL SUBJECTION."

There still remains to be considered the duty which all in a christian church, whether office-bearers or private members, owe to each other, as stated by the apostle in these words, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

It has been supposed by some interpreters, that these words are not to be considered as having any particular reference to Christians in their ecclesiastical relations, but as an injunction referring to all the relations of human life; and that the subjection one to another required, is either that mutual kindly consideration of each other's interests, and that readiness to submit to inconvenience to promote these interests, which is required by the law, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do also to them," and which is equally due in all the relations of society, from all to all; or that the apostle meant to intimate, that not only in the ecclesiastical relation, but in all the relations of life, subjection to superiors is a christian duty; that not only is the church member to be subject to the church ruler, but the member of the state to the state ruler, the member of the family to the family ruler; the wife to the husband, the child to the parent,

[1] Isa. lviii. 8, 11.

the servant to the master; that, in one word, wherever the relation of inferior and superior is established by God, there the duty of subjection finds place, as in Ephesians v. 21, where the general command, "Submit yourselves to one another," is followed and illustrated by the particular injunctions, 'Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands; children, obey your parents; servants be obedient to your masters.' Either of these important moral truths might, without violence, be brought out of the words before us, viewed by themselves; but considered as a part of a closely connected paragraph, there can be no reasonable doubt, that the term "all of you," refers to the elders and to the juniors just mentioned, the office-bearers and members of the church; and that the duty enjoined is a duty equally owing by the elders to each other, by the members to each other, and by the elders and members to each other.

It may be of use in enabling you to perceive the precise import and bearing of the apostle's words, to remark, that their literal rendering is, "But let all of you, being subject one to another, be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble." As if he had said, 'While it is the duty of church officers to exercise the rule with which Christ has invested them, and for church members to yield the obedience which Christ has enjoined on them, there is a kind of mutual subjection which all church members owe to all church members; which all church officers owe to all church officers; ay, which all church officers owe to all church members; in order to the discharge of which, it is necessary to cherish and display that humility which is in a remarkable degree the object of the Divine approbation.'

There are obviously three topics which the apostle's words bring before the mind, and which must be successively considered. 1. The duty which all connected with the christian church, whether as office-bearers or members, owe to each other—mutual subjection. 2. The means which are necessary to the discharge of this duty—the being clothed with, that is, the cherishing and manifesting humility; and, 3. The motive urging the use of this means, its being the object of the peculiar approbation of God—"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

CHAP. I.—OF THE MUTUAL SUBJECTION WHICH ALL IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH OWE TO EACH OTHER.

§ 1.—*What this does not imply.*

Let us first, then, inquire, what is that MUTUAL SUBJECTION which the apostle here enjoins on all Christians, whether office-bearers or private members. It is so plain as scarcely to require to be noticed, that the subjection here required is by no means the same thing, though expressed by the same word, as the submission which, in the preceding clause, the juniors are enjoined to yield to the elders, the church members to the church rulers. It is obvious that church members are not bound to submit, to be subject, to their fellow church members, as they are to their elders; still less, if possible, can

elders be bound to submit or be subject to the members, as the members are to be to them. This is obviously impossible; and to attempt it, were just, in other words, to annul church government, and to introduce all the disorders of ecclesiastical anarchy.

Nor does the command before us enjoin anything that in any degree involves in it a compromise of conscientious conviction respecting truth or duty. Christians must not submit to each other by taking each other's conscience as a guide in matters of faith or duty. Every man must give account of *himself* to God; and, so far as fellow-men or fellow-Christians are concerned, every man must think, inquire, judge, act, for himself. "One is our Master, even Christ."

The christian elder must not, in teaching or administering the law of Christ, fashion his conduct in subservience to the views and wishes of those committed to his care. He must speak what he knows to be true, because it is Christ's doctrine, whatever they may think of it. He must do what he knows to be right, because it is Christ's law, whatever they may think of it. He must not, in this way, be a servant of men, even of christian men. Were he to serve men in this way he could not be a servant of Christ. Were he to serve them in this way he would disserve them in a more important way.

No christian man must submit, in matters of conscience, to be led by another, to avow or conceal what he wishes him to avow or conceal; to do or refrain from doing, what he wishes him to do or refrain from doing. Instead of being thus subject to one another, when any such submission is sought, either on the part of fellow church members, or of church office-bearers, we are not to give subjection to such usurpation, "no, not for an hour." Our submission to one another is to be submission "in the fear of God."

§ 2.—*What this does imply.*

The mutual subjection referred to obviously implies a distinct recognition of, and a sacred regard to, our mutual rights as Christians and church members. Every encroachment by elders on the rights of church members, every encroachment by church members on the rights of their elders, every encroachment by church members, either individually or collectively, on each other's rights—and there has been a great deal too much of all these kinds of encroachment in the history of Christianity—is inconsistent with this mutual subjection. Every christian man, official or unofficial, is to be yielded to, submitted to, in the exercise of his legitimate rights. This is most reasonable; it is absolutely necessary to the peace of the society; and, if carefully and uniformly attended to, would go very far to secure that peace.

This regard for mutual rights must be connected with a just, and, because a just, a high estimate of the honor due to Christians as Christians. No man will ever perform well the duties of civil life who has not learned to "honor all men;" to honor man as man, and to see that the circumstances which distinguish one man from another are as nothing when compared with those which distinguish all men from the lower creation. In like manner, the higher a Christian estimates those privileges which are possessed by all Christians as Chris-

tians, and those spiritual characteristics which belong to every Christian, and which can belong to none but a Christian, the better will he be prepared to perform the duty here enjoined. Every Christian, just because he is a Christian, in relation and character a child of God, will be an object of his respectful affection; and he will find it impossible intentionally to treat him unjustly, contemptuously, or unkindly.

The disposition to mutual submission is greatly strengthened by that generous appreciation of the personal christian excellences of those with whom we are associated in church fellowship, to which christian principle naturally leads. Christians should be eagle-eyed towards each other's good qualities, "in honor preferring one another," each "esteeming others better than themselves."[1] When this state of mind prevails, "being subject to one another" follows as a matter of course. There is a disposition to oblige, a backwardness to occasion pain. While there is a mutual teaching, admonition, and exhortation, there is a mutual submission to instruction, admonition, and exhortation. And while a brother does not so hate his brother in his heart as to suffer sin on him, his brother reproved says by his conduct. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." Even Archippus, the office-bearer, will be subject to him, whether an official or only a christian brother, who in the right spirit says to him, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received of the Lord, to fulfil it."[2] There is a kindly yielding to each other in matters which do not involve conscience; and there is a serving one another in love, a readiness to submit to labor and inconvenience to promote one another's true happiness. Instead of insisting on having everything our own way, we have a satisfaction in pleasing, every one his neighbor, to his edification. We not only bear with the infirmities of our brethren: We bear their infirmities, not pleasing ourselves. We "forbear one another in love," and "seek not every man his own, but every man his neighbor's wealth."[3]

Such was the temper and conduct of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Though free from all, he became the servant of all. He most willingly both spent, and was spent, to promote the welfare of his brethren; and declares that he would neither eat flesh nor drink wine, while the world stood, if by this means his brother were likely to be offended, or made weak. "Who was weak, and he was not weak; who was offended, while he did not burn. To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak. To the Jew he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jew; to them who were under the law, as under the law, that he might gain them who were under the law; to them who were without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that he might gain them without law. He became all things to all men, that he might gain some."[4] Nor was this disposition in him confined to fellow-Christians; he was willing to be thus subject to every man, if that might but promote his happiness, secure his salvation.

Such was the temper and conduct of the great apostle's infinitely

[1] Rom. xii. 10. Phil. ii. 3.
[2] Psal. cxli. 5. Col. iv. 17.
[3] Rom. xv. 2. Eph. iv. 2. Col. iii. 13. 1 Cor. x. 24.
[4] 1 Cor. ix. 20, 21.

greater Lord and Master, and ours. He, though "Lord of all," became "the servant of all." Amid his disciples, he was as "one who served." "The Son of man," said he, and the whole of his life was an illustration of the saying, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many."[1] Never was the lesson here given by the apostle so strikingly taught, and so powerfully recommended, as in the conduct of our Lord in that memorable night in which he was betrayed, of which we have so touching a narrative in the evangelical history. "Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end. And there was a strife among the disciples, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And supper being ended, 'or rather being come,' Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself, 'clothing himself with humility.' After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so. But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he who sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."[2]

This kind of mutual subjection, readiness to serve one another, should characterize all the members of the church in their conduct to one another; but it should be especially prominent in the character and conduct of the office-bearers of the church. They ought never to forget, that though they are over their brethren in the Lord in one sense, in another they are not their lords; Christ Jesus is the Lord; they are their "servants for Jesus' sake."[3] Our Lord, aware of the tendency of superiority of rank to produce arrogance, warns his official servants against this hazard. "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."[4] The same truth is suggested by the peculiar form of expression in the passage before us. "Ye juniors, submit yourselves to the elders" in the discharge of their official functions; "but"[5] this is not the only kind of submis-

[1] Matt. xx. 28. [2] John xiii. 1–17. Luke xxii. 24–27. [3] 2 Cor. iv. 5.
[4] Matt. xxiii. 8, 10, 11. [5] δέ.

sion that is required in the church—among Christians; "let all of you," whether elder or younger, seniors or juniors, official rulers or private members, "let all of you be subject one to another." Mutually do service; and let him who is most esteemed in the church be the readiest to serve.

CHAP. II.—OF THE MEANS OF PERFORMING THIS DUTY, "THE BEING CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY."

Let us now, in the second place, consider the means by which Christians are to be enabled thus to be subject to one another. It is by being "clothed with humility." "Let all of you, being subject one to another, be clothed with humility." The idea plainly is, cherish and manifest humility; that will dispose and enable you to be subject one to another. But there is something peculiarly beautiful and instructive in the manner in which the idea is brought out. The apostle, in the Epistle to the Colossians, calls on Christians to "put on," among other christian virtues, "humbleness of mind," the same word rendered here "humility," as necessary to their "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another," which are just particular forms of being subject to one another.[1] The figure there is just the general one common in all languages. The cultivation and display of a disposition is represented as the putting on and wearing a garment. But there is more in the phrase before us. The word rendered "Be clothed," is a remarkable one, occurring nowhere else in Scripture. It is borrowed from a piece of dress worn by servants when they were doing menial offices, a kind of apron fastened by strings, a piece of dress which at once intimated their station, and fitted them for the performance of its duties.[2] The apostle calls on Christians, viewed as servants to each other, to put on humility as this piece of dress, to tie it on; just as he calls on them, as soldiers of the Captain of Salvation, to put on faith as a breastplate, and hope as an helmet. Cultivate humility, which will mark you as mutual servants, and fit you for mutual service. And it is difficult not to entertain the thought, that our Lord on the occasion already adverted to, putting on the towel like the servant's apron, and tying it around him, the visible emblem of his humility, and his readiness under its influence to serve, was before the apostle's mind; and that he then remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, words he was not likely to forget, "I have given you an example that ye should do, as I have done to you." All that is necessary here in the way of illustration, is shortly to show what that humility is which the apostle enjoins, and then in a few words to point out how it fits Christians for being "subject one to another."[3]

§ 1.—*Humility explained.*

Humility, or, as the same word is elsewhere rendered more literally, "humbleness of mind," "lowliness of mind," is expressive of a low because a just estimate of ourselves—of our nature, of our character, of our condition, of our deserts.

[1] Col. iii. 12. [2] See note D. [3] Col. iii. 12. Phil. ii. 3.

The humble man has just, and therefore lowly, views of his own nature, as a *creature* infinitely inferior to, entirely dependent on, God; greatly inferior to angels, belonging to the lowest order of God's intelligent offspring; and, as a *sinner*, the proper object not only of the judicial displeasure of God, but of the moral disapprobation of all good and wise intelligences; inexcusably guilty, thoroughly depraved, righteously doomed to everlasting destruction; who, if saved at all, must owe his salvation to the riches of free grace, sovereign mercy.

The humble man has also just, and therefore lowly, views of his own individual character. He is sensibly impressed with the heinousness and aggravation of his own sins; he feels his own heart to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; he knows that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing. If his inward and outward man, his character and conduct, have been brought into any measure of conformity to the mind and will of God, he is aware that, so far as he is a new creature, he is "God's workmanship, created of him unto good works;" that "by the grace of God he is what he is;" that the work of renovation is very imperfect in him; and there is still very much wanting, very much wrong; and that, while he has much for which to be thankful, he has much of which to be ashamed, nothing of which to be proud.

And not only does the humble man form a low estimate of his nature generally, and of himself individually, when he tests human nature, and his own character and conduct, by the law of God, but he cherishes a humble opinion of himself, intellectually, morally, spiritually, in comparison with others. His tendency is to notice the excellences, rather than the faults, of others; while he looks at his own faults rather than at his excellences, and "in lowliness of mind he esteems others better than himself." He knows his own deficiencies and faults much more extensively and thoroughly than he can know those of other men; and the charity which always accompanies true humility, leads him to attribute what seems to be good in other men to the best principle which can reasonably be supposed to have produced it; while it leads him, from the necessary ignorance of their motives, to make allowances for their defects and failings, which he cannot make for his own. Humility does not lead a man to overlook or disclaim what God has done in him or by him, but leads him to give all the glory to Him to whom it is due; and while he cannot but see that God has made him to differ from others, and be deeply grateful for this, he at once feels that it is God alone who has done this; and is so sensible of the manner in which he has counterworked the Divine operations for his sanctification, that he is very ready to believe and acknowledge, that any other person blessed with his helps and advantages, would have greatly surpassed him in his attainments. When he thinks of what he is in comparison of what he ought to have been, in comparison of what he might have been, when he thinks of what others with far inferior advantages have attained to, and recollects that whatever is spiritually good in him has been put into his heart by the invincible, but not unresisted, efficacious operation of the Holy Ghost, he not only feels that he ought to lie very low before

God, but that, even in reference to his fellow-men, he has nothing to boast of.

Humility has been well described as consisting in "the not being deluded with a false conceit of what we have not, not puffed up with a vain conceit of what we really have, nor affecting to be esteemed by others, either in their imagining us to be what we are not, or discerning us to be what we are."[1] Humility will not make us unconscious of what is good in us, but it will make us beware of imagining that to be good which is not, or that which is good to be better than it is; and it will constantly keep before the mind, that whatever good is in us, has been put into us, is not so much ours as God's, the gift of his grace, the work of his Spirit, and thus make the very consciousness of our sanctification, instead of puffing us up, a means of deepening the conviction, that no flesh may "glory in his presence," but that "he who glorieth must glory in the Lord."[2] Such is the humility with which the apostle exhorts all Christians to be clothed, that they may be all subject one to another.

§ 2.—*The tendency of humility to secure mutual subjection.*

I have already adverted to the peculiar force of the expression, "Be clothed." The command does not refer so much, if at all, to the manifestation of this disposition in demeanor and language, but rather to the cherishing of it in the heart, to the maintaining of it in all circumstances, as that which fits a Christian for being subject to his fellow-Christians, by serving them in love, like the servant who fastened his serving robes about him as necessary for the proper discharge of his duty as a servant. Humility is to the Christian, as the servant of all his brethren, what the appropriate dress for service was to the servant in common life. A proud, self-conceited man, is not disposed, is not qualified for serving others. He is continually making demands on others for service. It is their duty, in his estimation, to serve him, not his to serve them. A haughty mind ill comports with becoming all things to all men, pleasing our neighbor to his edification, in love serving each other, bearing one another's burdens, and so, in one word, fulfilling the law of Christ: just as a gaudy dress, a rich flowing robe, does not suit, is at once incongruous and inconvenient in one that serves. On the other hand the humble-minded man is ready to serve, feels honored in being permitted to do any office which can promote the honor of his Lord in the welfare of his brethren. Like the plainly, suitably-attired servant, he is like his work, and fit for it. He is ready to loose the latchets of his Lord's sandals, and to wash his brethren's feet.

The importance of humility, in order to the discharge of those offices which are so closely connected with the peace and spiritual prosperity of a church, is very strikingly manifested in the following exhortations of the apostle Paul: "Be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own

[1] Leighton. [2] 1 Cor. i. 29–31.

things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, that was in Christ Jesus," the disposition to humble himself that he might serve others. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any." [1]

CHAP. III.—OF THE MOTIVE URGING CHRISTIANS TO CULTIVATE HUMILITY.

The only other topic in the text which requires consideration, is the motive employed by the apostle to urge Christians to cultivate that humility which was so necessary to their mutually serving each other. "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and," or rather but,[2] "giveth grace to the humble." The leading idea is, 'humility is the object of the approbation of God, and pride of his disapprobation; and he makes this very manifest in his dispensations respectively to the proud and to the humble.' As to any disposition or action, the first question with every man ought to be, the first question with a Christian will be, What is the estimate God forms of them; what effect will the cultivation of the one and the performance of the other have on my relations towards him? and the resolution of that question ought to have more influence with every man, with every Christian will have more influence, than all other things taken together, as to his checkng or cherishing the disposition, following or avoiding the course of conduct. This matter is very clear as to pride and humility, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." This is a quotation from the book of Proverbs, iii. 34, according to the Greek version in common use at the time; in our version, which is a literal rendering of the Hebrew original, it runs thus, "Surely he scorneth the scorners, but giveth grace to the lowly."

"God resists the proud." He sets himself to oppose them. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that God should not disapprove of pride, for it is a disposition which, just in the degree in which it prevails, unfits a man for his duty to God and to man, makes him a rebel to the one and an oppressor to the other; and, in any view we can take of it, it counteracts God's design to glorify himself in making his creatures happy. The Divine disapprobation against pride is strongly marked in an endless variety of ways. It is deeply impressed on the constitution of man as God's work, whether you consider the misery it inflicts on its subjects, or the disapprobation and dislike it produces in all who witness it. An apocryphal writer has said, "Pride was not made for man." [3] It may be, with equal truth said, Man was not made for pride. It is a disposition he cannot indulge without making himself unhappy. They sadly err who "count the proud happy." There is harmony in all God's works, and, to make man happy, his disposition must correspond to his condition; a proud being, who is at the same time a dependent being, entirely dependent on God, to a great extent dependent on his fellow-men, must be mis-

[1] Phil. ii. 2–5. Col. iii. 12, 13. [2] Δέ. [3] Ecclus. x. 18.

erable. His whole life is a struggle to be and to appear to be what he is not, what he never can be.

The disapprobation of pride by God is evident, not only in his having so constituted man as that the proud man cannot be happy, but in his so constituting man as that the proud man is the natural object of disapprobation and dislike to all other men. No class of men are more disliked than proud men. And how could God more distinctly mark his disapprobation of pride, than by constituting human nature so, that the display of pride should excite in, and draw forth from men, sentiments directly opposite to those which the proud man wishes? He seeks admiration, he meets with contempt. No one really wishes to gratify the proud, and his mortification affords general satisfaction.

In the ordinary course of his providential dispensations, God so often shows his opposition to pride, that it has become a proverb, that 'a haughty spirit goeth before a fall;' and He has sometimes departed out of his usual mode of procedure, and miraculously shown how much he disapproves of haughtiness in man. Nebuchadnezzar, the proud king of Babylon, walked in the palace of his kingdom; and as he walked, he spake and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" How strikingly and effectually did God resist this proud man, and show that He, the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgments, is able to abase those who walk in pride! While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee: And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Take another example: "Upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne, and made an oration. And the people gave a shout, 'It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.' And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten up of worms, and gave up the ghost." [1]

The plan of salvation through Christ is so framed as strikingly to show that "God resisteth the proud." No man can become a partaker of its blessings who does not "deny," renounce, "himself." It is only as a being deserving, capable of deserving, nothing but punishment, and deeply sensible of this, that any man can obtain the pardon and peace, the holiness and comfort, of the christian salvation. "The rich" in their own estimation "are sent empty away." Men, who are all naturally proud, must be "converted, and become" humble "like little children," else they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.[2] And just in that degree in which pride prevails, even in

[1] Dan. iv. 29–33. Acts xii. 21–23. [2] Luke i. 53.

a regenerate man, will he fail to enjoy the consolation that is in Christ. The declarations of Scripture on this subject are very explicit, "Pride and arrogancy I hate. The Lord knoweth the proud afar off. The lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low."[1] "God," to borrow the words of Archbishop Leighton, "singles out pride as his great enemy, and sets himself in battle array against it, as the word is.[2] It breaks the ranks of men in which he hath set them, when they are not subject, as the word is before;[3] yea, it not only breaks rank, but rises up in rebellion against God, and doth what it can to dethrone him and usurp his place. Therefore, he orders his force against it; and so be sure, if God be able to make his party good, pride shall not escape ruin. He will break it, and bring it low; for he is set upon that purpose, and will not be diverted."

While God thus resists the proud, "he giveth grace"—that is, he shows favor—"to the humble." Humility is the object of his approbation, and he shows this by his conduct to those who are characterized by it. An humble state of mind, as in accordance with truth, and calculated to promote the true happiness both of the individual who cherishes it, and of all with whom he is connected, must be the object of the Divine approbation; and we have just to reverse the representation given of the manifestation of the state of the Divine mind, in reference to the proud, to see how he shows favor to the humble. He does so in the quiet and peace of mind which, from the very constitution of human nature, humility produces; and in the comparative freedom from ill-will, and enjoyment of the esteem and good wishes of others, which from the same constitution it secures. The more deeply a man realizes his insignificance as a creature, and his demerit as a sinner, his guilt and depravity and helplessness, the more readily does he embrace the gospel of God's grace, "the word of the truth of the gospel," and in it obtain possession of all heavenly and spiritual blessings. It is the man who knows and believes that he is a fool, that is made wise; the man who has no hope in himself, that obtains "good hope through grace;" the man who sees and feels that he is nothing but sin, that is "made the righteousness of God in Christ;" the man who loathes himself, that is "sanctified wholly in the whole man—soul, body and spirit." It is the man who most feels his own weakness, that is most "strengthened with all might in the inner man," and experimentally understands the spiritual paradox, "When I am weak, then am I strong." It is a remark, by one who was very intimately acquainted with the hidden life, "It is undoubtedly the secret pride and selfishness of our hearts that obstructs much of the bounty of God's hand, in the measure of our graces and the sweet embraces of his love, which we should otherwise find. The more that we let go of ourselves, still the more should we receive of himself. Oh, foolish we, that refuse so blessed an exchange!"[4] The

[1] Prov. viii. 13. Psal. cxxxviii. 6. Isa. ii. 11, 12.
[2] Ἀντιτάσσεται.
[3] Ὑποτασσόμενοι.
[4] Leighton.

passages of Scripture in which God declares his approbation of humility, and his delight in the humble, are very numerous. "Though the Lord be high, he has respect to the lowly. He forgets not the cry of the humble, he hears their desire; he prepares their hearts, he causes his ear to hear. Thus, saith the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one." And this is the declaration of Him who came to reveal the character and will of his Father, and who was himself meek and lowly in spirit, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; but he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [1]

Leighton's paraphrase on "God giveth grace to the humble," is characteristically beautiful. "He pours it out plentifully on humble hearts. His sweet dews and showers slide off the mountains, and fall on the low valley of humble hearts, and make them pleasant and fertile. The swelling heart, puffed up with a fancy of fulness, has no room for grace, is not hollowed and fitted to receive and contain the graces that descend from above. And again, as the humble heart is most capable, as emptied and hollowed out it can hold most; so it is most thankful, acknowledges all as received. But the proud cries all is his own. The return of glory that is due for grace, comes most freely and plentifully from a humble heart. God delights to enrich it with grace, and it delights to return to him glory. The more he bestows on it, the more it desires to honor him withal; and the more it doth so, the more readily he still bestows more upon it. And this is the sweet intercourse between God and the humble soul. This is the noble ambition of humility, in respect of which all the aspirings of pride are low and base. When all is reckoned, the lowliest mind is truly the highest; and these two agree so well, that the more lowly it is, it is thus the higher; and the higher thus, it is still the more lowly."

Surely this is a powerful motive for the cultivation of humility. What so much to be feared as God's disapprobation, and what so much to be desired as his favor? The command, "be ye clothed with humility," has great additional force from the consideration, that this was the chosen garb of our Lord and King, and chosen by him as that in which he could both best serve his Father and his people. Surely, to use the words of an old divine, "It is meet that we should remember, that the blessed Saviour of the world hath done more to prescribe, and transmit, and secure this grace, than any other, his whole life being a great continued example of humility; a vast descent from the glorious bosom of his Father to the womb of a poor maiden; to the form of a servant, to the miseries of a sinner, to a life of labor, to a state of poverty, to a death of malefactors, to an untimely grave, to all the intolerable calamities which we deserved; and it were a good design, and yet but reasonable, that we should be as humble in the midst of our calamities and base sins, as he was

[1] Psal. cxxxviii. 6; x. 12, 17. Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2. Matt. xxiii. 12; v. 3.

in the midst of his fulness of the Spirit, great wisdom, perfect life, and most admirable virtues."[1]

And while the thought, that it is only by thus putting on humility that Christians can be mutually subject to and serve each other, and thus promote the peace and prosperity of the church on earth, should be felt as a powerful incentive to grow in this grace; we should remember, also, that the cultivation of this grace is a necessary preparation for the holy delights of the church above. They to whom, on that day when men's destinies shall be finally fixed, the universal Judge will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," are those who can scarcely recognize their own actions in those eulogized by him.[2] And the exercises of heaven are such as only the humble can engage in with satisfaction. They fall down on their faces there before the throne and Him who sits on it; they cast their crowns at his feet. The only worthiness they celebrate is the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain; and the whole glory of their salvation is ascribed to Him, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things. "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb forever and ever." We must be formed to the temper of heaven if we would be sharers in its joys. We must have the same mind in us as is in the holy angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, if we would be admitted to their society, and participate in their delights. Were we to carry pride with us to heaven, it would soon cast us out again, as it did the angels, who kept not their first estate. Let us then earnestly covet a large measure of this heavenly temper. Let it be our constant prayer, that the Spirit of all grace would so bring the truth before our minds, and keep it there, respecting our condition and character as creatures and sinners, sinners lost by their own inexcusable guilt, saved solely by the sovereign grace of God, as that every rising of undue self-complacency may be repressed, and that we may be enabled to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness; with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Oh, how happy the church, where all the elders and all the members are habitually under the influence of christian humility! May that blessing, through the grace of Him who is exalted to be "Head over all things to his church," be increasingly ours! And to his name be all the glory.

NOTE A, p. 673.

How different was the spirit which animated those who pretended to be Peter's successors, appears strikingly in a remarkable story told in the Clementine Homilies:—"Peter, wishing to establish in a bishopric, Zaccheus, who was backward to accept of it, cast himself at his feet, and entreated him to administer τὴν ἀρχὴν—the princedom. 'I would readily do,' said Zaccheus, 'whatever a prince ought to do; but I am afraid to bear the name, because it exposes to so much envy as to be dangerous.' Peter consented that Zaccheus should not take the name of prince; but he gave him all the authority of one.

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[1] Jeremy Taylor. [2] Matt. xxv. 37–39.

Καὶ σοῦ μὲν ἔργον, said he, κελεύειν· τῶν δὲ ἀδελφῶν ὑπείκειν καὶ μὴ ἀπείθειν. 'It is your business to command; and, as to the brethren, it is theirs to submit to and obey you.'" It is universally admitted that the Clementine Homilies are forgeries; but they are very authentic evidences of the spirit of the Roman Church at the time of their production. The bishops are there represented as Δυνασταὶ, βασιλεῖς, δεσποταὶ, κύριοι. How strangely does all this contrast with the words of the One Master,—"Call no man master on earth: be not ye called masters."—Hom. Clem. iii. 63, 64, 66, p. 646.

Note B, p. 681.

"Τῶν κλήρων plurale: singulare ποίμνης. Ποίμνη μία. Grex unus sub uno Pastore principe Christo: sed κλῆροι portiones multæ, pro numero locorum et antistitum.—Bengel. This view throws light on the whole passage. Among the Nomadic tribes wealth consisted almost entirely in flocks and herds. The great proprietors were just shepherds on a great scale. Ἀρχιποιμένες, ποιμένες ὧν εἰσὶ τὰ πρόβατα ἴδια.[1] The whole ποίμνη belonged to them: but under them there were ποιμενες, each of whom had his own κλῆρος. The Ἀρχιποιμὴν was often absent—but, on his coming to see his flocks, he would notice the manner in which the under-shepherds had treated *his* property, and deal with them accordingly.

"Vetustus quidem fuit ille loquendi modus, ut totum ordinem ministrorum clerum vocarent: sed utinam Patribus nunquam venisset in mentem ita loqui: quia quod toti Ecclesiæ Scriptura communiter tribuit, minime consentaneum fuit ad paucos homines restringere."—Calvin.

"Clerus temporibus Apostolorum erant plebeii, quod apparet ex prima Petri Epistola majestuosa."—Scaliger.

"Cleros vocat non diaconos aut presbyteros, sed gregem qui cuique fortè contigit gubernandus ne quis existimet, Episcopis in Clericos interdictum dominium, in ceteros esse permissum. Et presbyteros hic Episcopos vocat. Nondum enim increverat turba sacerdotum; sed quot erant Presbyteri, totidem erant Episcopi."—Erasmus.

"Olim populus Israeliticus κλῆρος, sors, sive patrimonium Dei, Deut. iv. 20; ix. 29. Nunc populus Christianus; cujus singulæ partes ut fieri solet ἐν ὁμογενέσει idem nomen participant."—Grotius.

"Κλήρους hereditates vocat Ecclesias singulas, quibus singuli pastores præficiuntur."—Suicer.

"All believers are God's clergy."—Leighton.

It deserves notice, that it is a verb derived from κλήρους which is used, Acts xvii. 4, to describe the association of the believers with Paul and Silas at Thessalonica—προσεκληρώθησαν. Our translators have preserved the reference in their version "consorted."

"Κλήρους multi Latinorum interpretantur clericos; veruntamen longe probabilius est, per cleros intelligi gregis dominici portiones, quæ singulis Episcopis pascendæ ac regendæ velut sortito obtigerunt, juxta id quod Cyprianus dicit, Ecclesiam esse unam, cujus singulas portiones singuli Episcopi in solidum tenent."—Estius.

Vater takes a singular view of the meaning of the term here: "Κλήρων plurali numero, non nisi, Acts i. 26, eodemque forsan significatu et hic." In this case κατακυρεύειν τῶν κλήρων would signify arbitrarily to overrule the votes, to disregard the will of the church, when manifested by their giving forth their κλήρους.

Note C, p. 687.

A word of similar meaning (Νεανίσκοι) is apparently used in the New Testament to signify common soldiers, Mark xiv. 51, as well as in the profane Greek (Polyb. iv. 16; iii. 62). A similar usage prevails in the Latin language, as to the word of corresponding meaning (Juvenis). We find the same thing in the Hebrew language: Abraham's armed servants are called "the young men" (נערים), Gen. xiv. 24. We have the same use of the word, Jos. ii. 1; 2 Sam. ii. 14; Gen. xviii. 7; Psal. cx. 3: "The word 'young,' possesses, in the christian usage of various languages, the sense of 'lay'—see Bolten."—Steiger.

"Νεώτεροι hic non videntur esse natu minores; nam opponuntur doctoribus, sed potius auditores et discipuli, eodem fere sensu, quo, Luc. xxii. 26, ὁ μείζων et ὁ νεώτερος sibi opponuntur."—Rosenmuller.

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[1] John x. 12. Gen. xlvii. 6. 1 Sam. xxi. 7.

"Νεώτεροι opponuntur πρεσβύτεροις et ex lege oppositionis intelligendi sunt omnes reliqui qui exceptis Presbyteris ecclesiam constituerent."—KUTTNER.

SCHOTANUS, though obviously very averse, "a communi Doctorum sententia discedere videri," states very distinctly, and defends very successfully, what appears to me the true meaning:—"Hic per *juniores* intelligimus totam ecclesiam. Id autem probamus (1.) ex repetitione verbi *presbyteri;* (2.) ex collatione in verbis: *similiter;* (3.) quia summissionem regimini opponit; (4.) quia passim Apostoli quando agunt de officiis in quibus mutuus est respectus, solent utrumque urgere. Si autem quis dicat nomen illud *juniores* repugnari, respondemus—nequam. Nonne Apostolus Paulus totam Ecclesiam Galaticam 'filiolos' vocat, Gal. iv. 19, et hæc ratio est, quia tum temporis præcipue Ecclesiæ præficiebantur qui provectioris ætatis erant."

"Per juniores autem hoc loco maxime intelligitur Grex qui pendet à pastoribus, quia pastores et presbyteri, maxima ex parte, electi fuerunt ex senioribus ætate, et proinde maxima pars gregis constabat ex junioribus."—AMESIUS. "Sicut nomen, senior, præfectum significat, etiam si ætate sit minor, ita nomen, junior, sive adolescens, recte interpretante Beda, subditum omnem, tametsi ætate superiorem designat."—HESSELIUS.

NOTE D, p. 703.

"Κόμβος nodus vinculum quo illigabantur manicæ præsertim in vestitu servorum."—BENGEL. Grotius gives the following quotation from Pollux, lib. iv., which is quite to the point:—Τῇ τῶν δούλων ἐξωμίδι καὶ ἱματίδιόν τί προσκεῖται λευκὸν, ὃ ἐγκόμβωμα λέγεται. Putting on the ἐγκόμβωμα, was preparing in a becoming manner to act as a servant; assuming the appearance and preparing for the duties of the servile state. "Ἐγκόμβωμα vestis humilis et servorum erat: qui cum breves tunicas quas ἐπωμίδας vocant gestarent, super has ἐγκόμβωμα induere solebant; palliolum vilissimum sed candidum; quod et ἐπίβλημα ut observant antiqui dicebant."—HEINSIUS. Sac. Exercit. p. 577.

DISCOURSE XXII.

TWO VIEWS OF AFFLICTION AND ITS DUTIES.

1 Pet. v. 6, 7.—Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

There are few practical questions of deeper and more extensive interest, than how should we conduct ourselves amid the afflictions of life, so as to be best sustained under them, most improved by them, and soonest and most certainly delivered from them? This is a question which concerns us all; for, however we may differ in other points of view, here we all occupy common ground. We are all sufferers. It is not less universally true that "man is born of a woman," than that he is "born to trouble." It is certain, too, that affliction, though in all forms in itself an evil, is far from being an unmixed evil; that by means of it, men, constituted and circumstanced as they are, may be made wiser and better, and ultimately happier, than they could have become without it. "It has been good for me that I have been afflicted," says the Psalmist. "Chastisement yieldeth peaceable fruits,"[1] says the apostle. And there is "a great crowd of witnesses" of the wisest and the best, in every age, all of whom have set to their seal that this testimony is true.

It is, however, just as certain that there have been many sufferers who could not truly make the psalmist's declaration their own. It has *not* been good for them that they have been afflicted. They were bad when affliction seized them; they did not improve under its grasp; and now that it has let them go, they are worse than ever. Indeed, the waters sent forth from the fountain of affliction seem in themselves poisonous as well as bitter. The infusion of a foreign ingredient into them appears to be necessary to make them salutary, or even safe. Their effects are usually powerful; but they often aggravate rather than mitigate moral disease.

The different effects of affliction on different individuals, depend mainly on their being, or their not being, under the influence of the Holy Spirit; and that is chiefly manifested in the views they entertain of affliction, and in the dispositions they cherish under affliction, two things which are very closely connected with each other. The influence of affliction on the mind and character of a man who considers his sufferings as the effect of blind chance or unintelligent necessity, or of intelligent but malignant power; and who is inconsiderate, or proud, or fretful, or desponding under them—must be very

[1] Job xiv. 1. Psal. cxix. 71. Heb. xii. 11.

different from its influence on the mind of a man who considers his sufferings as proceeding from the appointment, and inflicted by the agency, of the infinitely powerful, wise, righteous, and benignant Sovereign of the universe; as tokens of displeasure against sin, yet means of reclaiming sinners; as important parts of God's mysterious economy for making foolish, depraved, miserable man, wise, and good, and happy; and who cultivates a thoughtful, submissive, prudent, devout, patient, hopeful disposition under them.

The moral effect of affliction on an irreligious or superstitious mind cannot but be mischievous, though it will vary with the variety of character and circumstance, and take the form, in one case, of stupid insensibility; in another, of querulous fretfulness; in another, of hopeless despondency; in another, of hardened impiety. It will in every such case drive men from God, not draw them towards him. It will make them worse and more miserable, not better and happier; it will fit them for hell, not for heaven.

On the other hand, the moral effect of affliction in a mind enlightened with heavenly truth, and a heart pervaded by holy influence, must be in a very high degree advantageous. Every principle of the new life, such as faith, hope, penitence, patience, humility, self-sacrifice, is exercised and strengthened; and the result is, increased conformity in mind, and will, and choice, and enjoyment, with the all-wise, the all-holy, the all-benignant, the ever blessed, God. Who would not wish that his afflictions might have this result? We must be chastened; this is a settled point. "To each his sufferings, all are men."[1] Who would not tremble to be so chastened as to be destroyed with the world? who would not desire to be so chastened as to be made partakers of God's holiness? It is this book that alone can so instruct us in the true nature of afflictive dispensations, and in the right way of dealing with these dispensations; as that it may be secured that, in our case, the last, and not the first, result shall be realized. We must go to the school of revelation, in order to learn how to behave ourselves in the school of affliction so as to obtain improvement there; and a most instructive lesson of this kind may be derived from that interesting passage of inspired Scripture which has been read as the subject of discourse. May the great Teacher, who makes all whom he teaches apt to learn, enable us so to improve it, as that "his rod and reproof," when he sees meet to subject us to them, may more than ever "give wisdom!"

These words present us with two interesting views of affliction; first, as a state of subjection to the mighty hand of God; and, secondly, as a state of anxiety and carefulness; and with two corresponding views of the duty of the Christian under affliction, each accompanied with its appropriate motive. In the first view of affliction, the Christian is to humble himself under the mighty hand of God; and he is to do this because humility is well-pleasing to God, because it is the hand of God, the mighty hand of God, that he is under, and because doing so is the appointed way to be exalted in due time; and in the second view of affliction, the Christian is to cast all his cares on God, and he is to do this because God cares for him. This is the

[1] Gray.

outline I mean to fill up in the remaining part of the discourse; and, in doing this, I shall not first consider the two views of affliction, then the two views of the duty of the Christian under affliction, and then the two views of motive urging to the performance of these duties, but I shall successively, as the apostle does, take up each connected view of affliction, duty, and motive.

Before entering on this, however, it may be proper to say a word or two on the manner in which these two verses are connected with the immediately preceding context. In the close of his directory respecting ecclesiastical duties, the apostle recommends the cultivation of humility as necessary to that mutual subjection by which all in christian fellowship, whether office-bearers or private members, whether elders or juniors, should be distinguished; calling them to put it on as their appropriate dress when in love they served each other; and he strengthens his recommendation by quoting an Old Testament oracle, in which God's complacent approbation of the humble, and his indignant reprobation of the proud, are strongly expressed. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." And in proceeding to offer them some advices suited to those circumstances of persecution and trial to which, by the appointment of God, and through the direct and indirect agency of the great adversary the devil, they were already exposed, and were likely soon to be still more exposed, he naturally, in so high a recommendation of humility as a disposition peculiarly pleasing to God, finds a ground for enjoining on them the cultivation and display of this virtue, in reference to their afflictions, viewed as the work of God's hand: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves *therefore* under the mighty hand of God." The quotation from the Old Testament is brought forward as a motive to enforce equally the injunction that precedes it, and the injunction that follows it.

I.—FIRST VIEW OF AFFLICTION, AND ITS DUTY.

§ 1.—*Affliction is subjection to the mighty hand of God.*[1]

The first view here given us of a state of affliction is, that it is a state of subjection to the mighty hand of God. The words of the apostle are equivalent to, Being in affliction, ye are under the mighty hand of God; humble yourselves under it. "The hand of God," like "the arm of the Lord," is a figurative expression for the power of God in action, as men put forth their power by their arm and hand. He is said to have brought his people from Egypt "by strength of hand;" that is, by the exertion of power. It is said, "None can stay his hand," none can prevent or control the exertion of his power. When Job expresses a wish that, by an act of Divine power, he might be destroyed, he says, "Oh that it would please God to let loose his hand, and cut me off;" and, speaking of the power of God as the efficient cause of all things, he says, "The hand of the Lord hath done this, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath

[1] Vide Note A.

of all mankind."[1] The epithet "mighty" is added to suggest the idea of great, resistless energy.

To have the hand of God on a person, to be in his hand, or under his hand, does not necessarily indicate being in a state of affliction. It merely means that the power of God is exercised with regard to that person. Jehovah is said by Moses "to love his people;" and in a parallel case he adds, "All his saints are in thy hand," protected by thy power. "The hand of our God," says Ezra, "is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. The hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy." The powerful inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit is described as the hand of the Lord being on the prophets, in the cases of Elijah and Ezekiel. But the phrase is very often used in a more specific sense, as descriptive of the power of God put forth for punishment or chastisement. It is said, "the hand of the Lord was heavy on the men of Ashdod," when he visited them with a severe judgment. "The hand of the Lord is on thy cattle," said Moses to Pharaoh, when he announced the plague of murrain. "Have pity on me," says Job, "Have pity on me, O my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." "Day and night," says the psalmist, "thy hand was heavy on me. Thine arrows stick fast in me; thy hand presseth me sore."[2] "Let me not fall into the hand of man, but into the hand of the Lord," said David, when called to choose whether war, or famine, or pestilence, was to be the punishment of his son. Some interpreters consider the phrase before us, "under the mighty hand of God," as merely referring generally to the being entirely at the disposal of God, completely in his hand; but the use of the epithet mighty, and the contrast of the depressed state of the person *under* the mighty hand of God, with the state of elevation promised him if the temper of his mind should properly correspond with his circumstances, as well as the succeeding context, all convince me that the apostle had in his eye "the manifold trials," "the afflictions," to which, as a part of the christian brotherhood in the world, those to whom he wrote were exposed. The thought which he wished to bring strongly before their mind is this: 'Those afflictions to which you are exposed are the result of the Divine appointment and agency.' Let us shortly illustrate that thought; it is an important one.

"Affliction cometh not forth of the dust; trouble doth not spring from the ground." They "come down from above;" they "come forth from Him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."[3] There are many who think and feel in reference to afflictive dispensations, as the Philistines of old did, when they said, "a chance hath happened us." But there is neither blind chance, nor unintelligent necessity, in God's world. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." No event occurs apart from his plan,

[1] Job vi. 9; xii. 10.

[2] Deut. xxxiii. 3. Ezra viii. 22, 31. 1 Kings xviii. 46. Ezek. i. 3. 1 Sam. v. 11. Exod. ix. 3. Job xix. 21. Psal. xxxii. 4; xxxviii. 2. 1 Chron. xxi. 13.

[3] Job v. 6. James i. 17. Isa. xxviii. 29.

and the execution of his plan. "His counsel stands, and he doth all his pleasure."[1]

The doctrine of providence, a particular providence (for it is not very easy to understand what is meant by a general providence as opposed to a particular one), is supported by numerous and powerful arguments, deduced from rational principles, as well as from the declarations of inspired Scripture. Admit the wisdom, the power, and the omnipresence of the Divine Being, and you cannot consistently deny his providence. "Are not two sparrows," says our Lord, "sold for a farthing? yet one of them shall not fall on the ground without your father: even the hairs of your head are all numbered."[2] Can He who cares for sparrows, and numbers the hairs of our head, can he be inattentive to, or unconcerned in, what so closely concerns the honor of his character, and the highest interests of his people, as their afflictions?

The agency of God in the afflictions of his people is not only deducible from, or more properly involved in, the doctrine of his universal providence; but it is taught in the most explicit terms which language can furnish: "Shall there be evil," that is, suffering, affliction, in any form, "in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no god beside me. I form the light, and create the darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and he lifteth up." "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any who can deliver out of my hand." "He maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole." The person accidentally killed, as we phrase it, is by Moses said to be "delivered by God into the hands" of the person who unintentionally deprived him of life.[3]

And we are to consider those afflictions as proceeding from the hand of God, not merely when there appears to us no intermediate agent, whether physical or intelligent, as in the case of sudden death, or unaccountable accident; but whatever be the immediate occasion, whether they occur from the operation of what we call natural causes, in the course of the established order of things, or from the agency of intelligent beings, human, angelic, or infernal, they are to be considered as coming forth from him "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things."[4] The miraculous slaughter of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, for whose punishment the Lord "made a new thing," and the death of those who through disease or old age were cut off in the wilderness, were equally the works of the Lord. Wars which spring from human passions, and are carried on through human instrumentality, equally with the famine and the pestilence, are numbered among the works of God; and their ravages are "desolations which he makes in the earth."[5] When adversity mingles its bitter

[1] 1 Sam. vi. 9. Eph. i. 11. Isa. xlvi. 10.
[2] Matt. x. 29, 30.
[3] Amos iii. 6. Isa. xlv. 7. 1 Sam. ii. 6. Deut. xxxii. 39. Job v. 18. Exod. xxi. 13.
[4] Rom. xi. 36.
[5] Psal. xlvi. 8.

ingredients in our cup, whatever these ingredients are, let us never forget that it is God who puts that cup into our hand. It matters not whether our affliction springs from those disastrous visitations in which the agency of man has no part, and over which it has no control, like that mysterious blight which has lately turned into rottenness so large a portion of the produce of our fields, and the food of the people; or arises from the improvidence, the injustice, or the cruelty of human beings; in either case it forms a part of the administration of Him whose kingdom ruleth all. Job spoke like a philosopher as well as a saint; his words were those of wisdom as well as of piety, when, after the Sabeans had carried away his oxen, the fire of God falling from heaven had consumed his sheep, the Chaldeans had robbed him of his camels, and murdered his servants, and a great wind from the wilderness had buried his children in the ruins of his eldest son's house, he said, "It is the Lord." The lightning and the tempest, the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, he considered, and rightly, as the instruments (the human beings, the guilty instruments) of the execution of God's most holy and righteous appointment. "The Lord," said he, "gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."[1] And He of whose faith and patience Job's afford but a faint resemblance, amid his unparalleled sufferings, proceeding in a great measure directly from the malignant agency of men and devils, looked beyond Judas and his band, Caiaphas and the chief priests, the denial of Peter and the flight of the disciples, Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers, the prince of darkness and his hosts, to Him whose high and holy determination all these were unconsciously and most wickedly carrying into accomplishment, and with meek reverence and devout submission said, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?"[2]

This important principle, that our afflictions are the work of God, seems the principal truth intended to be taught by the representation before us; a truth, the apprehension of which is absolutely necessary to the deriving of any spiritual advantage from affliction. A conviction of this will persuade us that our afflictions are not the effect of caprice, or of cruelty; that they are the result of design, wise design, benignant design, sent to serve a purpose, a holy and benevolent purpose.

The words, however, seem farther to indicate, what we are very ready to forget, that in affliction God is very near us. He is always so, ever at our right and left hand, intently looking on us; but in affliction, to rouse us to the fact of his nearness, He, as it were, lays his hand on us; and we are stupid indeed if we still continue inapprehensive of his presence.

Affliction, as a laying God's hand on us, intimates not only that he is near us, but that he is actually dealing with us; he has business with us, he has to do with us, and we have to do with him. He has accounts to settle with us; He is not satisfied with us; we are not what he would have us to be. If we were, he would not indeed let us alone; that were a dreadful evil; but he would interfere only to give new proofs of his love in new gifts of his grace; his hand would

[1] Job i. 21. [2] John xviii. 11.

never be on us for chastisement; it would be on us only for good. He does not afflict willingly. If he gives us a blow, assuredly we deserve it. We have provoked it. It comes from a reluctant hand.

Still farther, in the case of God's own people, and it is of them the apostle is speaking, affliction, viewed as laying his hand on them, is a manifestation of kind interest in them. He has not given them up; He means to make something of them; He smites because he loves them; He "chastens them for their profit." It is not the stroke of a cruel one; it is not the hand of the destroyer. To vary the figure, affliction with them is as "the refiner's fire, and the fuller's soap." "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify them and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering of righteousness." [1]

§ 2.—*Our duty in affliction is to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God."*

Having thus considered the Christian's state of affliction as a state of subjection to God's chastening hand, let us now consider the corresponding view the apostle gives of their duty: Christians are to "humble themselves under the mighty hand of God." The command is equivalent to "despise not the chastening of the Lord." Rebel not against it, fret not under it, murmur not at it, call not in question either Jehovah's right, or the manner in which he asserts it. Beware of doubting the wisdom, or the righteousness, or the kindness of the visitation. "Be still, and know that *He* is God." "Glorify the Lord in the fires." "Sanctify the Lord God in your heart." "Hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it." [2] The whole truth on this subject may be comprehended in the three-fold injunction—humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, as creatures under the hand of their Creator; as subjects under the hand of their Sovereign; as children under the hand of their Father.

(1.) *As creatures under the hand of the Creator.*

Christians in affliction should humble themselves as creatures under the hand of their Creator. Pride, impatience, murmuring, and rebellion under affliction, which all flow from pride, are absolutely monstrous in a creature under the hand of the Creator. What is the creature but what the Creator has made him? What has he but what God has given him? Is not he and all that he has far more the Creator's property than his own? Is he not, must he not be, ought he not to be, entirely dependent on, submissive to, Him who made him? "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" "Shall the clay say to him who fashioned it, What makest thou? or the work to him who formed it, Thou hast no hands?" "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood?" [3] In affliction we feel the touch of that hand

[1] Heb. xii. 10. Mal. iii. 3. [2] Psal. xlvi. 10. Isa. xxiv. 15; viii. 13. Mic. vi. 9.
[3] Rom. ix. 22. Isa. xlv. 9; x. 15.

which made us, and which can easily turn us to dust again. Surely, in these circumstances, it is meet to acknowledge that we are "nothing, less than nothing and vanity," before him "who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty;" "of whom, through whom, to whom, are all things." We should even wonder that he takes so much notice of us as to send us salutary afflictions. "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! that thou shouldest visit him every morning and try him every moment? Man who is like unto vanity; whose days are as a shadow that passeth away!" [1]

(2.) *As subjects under the hand of their Sovereign—rebel subjects under the hand of their righteously offended Sovereign.*

Christians should humble themselves in affliction as subjects under the hand of their Sovereign, as rebel subjects under the hand of their righteously offended Sovereign. If creatures should be humble just because they are creatures, sinful creatures are tenfold bound to be humble. In the being sinners, everything base and degrading is necessarily included. There is no folly like sin, no baseness like sin. Affliction is intended to bring sin to remembrance. We should never forget our guilt and depravity, and the state of condemnation and debasement into which they have brought us; but in the day of affliction we should especially say, "I remember my faults this day," I lay my hand on my mouth, my mouth in the dust, unclean, unclean. I have no ground of complaint, I can have none. I deserve no good. I deserve all evil. "It is of the Lord's mercies I am not consumed." [2] Does it not become rebels justly doomed to death, spared by the clemency of their insulted, injured sovereign, yet bearing ever on them distinct marks of their crime, and both of his unmerited clemency and just displeasure, does it not become them to be humble? Deep self-abasement is the becoming temper in him who knows that he has incurred the righteous displeasure of God by innumerable, unprovoked violations of the law that is holy, just, and good; and that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing. Deep self-abasement is the temper which becomes him at all times, and especially when he is under the mighty hand of God. However severe the afflictions, why should he murmur? Why should he complain? "A man for the punishment of sins," a man punished, but punished far less than his iniquities deserve? "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." The language of his heart should be, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee." "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? O, thou Preserver of men." "I have sinned, I have committed iniquity, I have done wickedly, I have rebelled by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee, but to me confusion of face, because I have sinned against thee." [3] Thus does it become the sinner, under the mighty hand of

[1] Psal. cxliv. 3, 4.
[2] Lam. iii. 22.
[3] Lam. iii. 39. Job xxxiv. 31, 32. Jer. xii. 1. Job xl. 4; vii. 20. Dan. ix. 5, 7.

God, to "sit alone and keep silence, to put his mouth to the dust, if so be there may be hope?" This kind of humbling a person's self is just as becoming the converted as the unconverted man. It will forever continue a fact that he has broken God's holy law, and had a thoroughly depraved nature; and the recollection of these facts, which affliction is intended to recall to the mind, should forever hide pride from the Christian's eyes.

(3.) *As children under the hand of their Father.*

But the Christian stands to God in the relation, not only of a creature to the Creator, not only of a subject to his sovereign, but also of a child to his father. This is the peculiar relation in which the Christian stands to God; and in this relation, he ought, in the season of affliction, to "humble himself under the mighty hand of God." Of all men, it least becomes the Christian to question the wisdom, or righteousness, or kindness of the Divine afflictive dispensations, to be fretful or unsubmissive under the mighty hand of God. He knows the character of him who inflicts chastisement; he knows how richly he deserves chastisement; he knows how much he stands in need of chastisement; he knows the true nature and design of chastisement; and therefore he ought to be distinguished by the humility of reverence, the humility of acquiescence, the humility of gratitude. He should humbly acknowledge the right of him who inflicts; he has done nothing but what he has a good right to do. He should humbly acknowledge that the affliction was not uncalled for; he has got nothing but what he deserves; and that, however heavy, it might have been much heavier, without affording him cause either of surprise or complaint; and he should humbly acknowledge his obligations to his Father in heaven, both for afflicting him and afflicting him in measure; for sending the very afflictions in kind and degree, which infinite wisdom saw he needed, and which infinite faithfulness secures shall serve their purpose. I cannot conclude this part of the subject better than in the words of the apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, when he bids them not forget "the exhortation which speaketh unto them as to children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord"—that is, in other words, humble yourself under his mighty hand. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?" [1]

§ 3.—*Motives to humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God.*

The motives which either implicitly or explicitly are here urged by the apostle for Christians thus humbling themselves under the mighty

[1] Heb. xii. 5–9.

hand of God, come now to be considered. They are the following:— We ought thus to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, for this is just a particular form of that humility which God so complacently approves, and the opposite of which he so indignantly condemns. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves *therefore*, for this reason, under the mighty hand of God. We should humble ourselves under the hand of God just because it is the hand of God. We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, because it is the *mighty* hand of God. Finally, we should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, because this is the appointed way of being exalted in due time.

(1.) *It is a part of the humility which God so complacently approves.*

We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, for this is a course of which God complacently approves; while the opposite is a course which he indignantly condemns. "He giveth grace," he manifests favor, towards those who humble themselves under his mighty hand; while he resists, he treats as enemies, those who despise his chastening, and rebel under the rod. This is a most powerful motive. What makes anything duty but its being according to the will of God, made known to us; what makes anything sin but its being opposed to the will of God, made known to us? Besides, the conscious possession of the cordial love, the complacent approbation of the greatest and wisest and best Being in the universe, arising out of constant manifestations of his favor, is the highest happiness a creature can enjoy. It is the essence of the happiness of holy angels and the spirits of the just made perfect. On the other hand, to be resisted, opposed, treated as an enemy by Him, is the greatest evil a creature can be exposed to; it is the essence of the miseries of devils and lost human beings.

(2.) *It is the hand of God we are called to humble ourselves under.*

We should humble ourselves under the hand of God, just because it is the hand of God. We should be humble in reference to God, because he is *God*, infinitely great, wise, and holy; because he is our Creator, our Governor, our Judge, our Father; because we are entirely dependent on him; because we are pensioners on his bounty; because we have incurred his displeasure, and are completely at his mercy. Humility should therefore be our habitual temper towards God; but when we are visited with affliction, when his hand is on us, these truths are more directly and powerfully presented to the mind. We are brought near God. He who despises the chastisement of the Lord, as it were, insults the Sovereign at a personal interview. He defies the Almighty even when he appears whetting his sword and bending his bow. "He stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth on him, even on his neck, on the thick bosses of his buckler."[1]

[1] Job xv. 26.

(3.) *It is the mighty hand of God we are called to humble ourselves under.*

Christians ought to humble themselves under the hand of God, for that hand is mighty; mighty to smite still harder, if the strokes given do not serve their purpose; mighty to deliver from, as well as to inflict, evil. There is no striving with success against him. As Archbishop Leighton says, "It is a vain thing to flinch and struggle, for he doth what he will; and his hand is so mighty, that the greatest power of the creature is nothing to it; yea, it is all indeed derived from him, and therefore cannot do any whit against him. If thou wilt not yield, thou must yield; if thou wilt not lead, thou shalt be pulled and drawn; therefore, submission is your only course."

(4.) *To humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, is the appointed way of our being in due time exalted.*

Finally, Christians should humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, for this is the appointed way to their being exalted. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that ye may be exalted." That humility leads to exaltation, as pride to degradation, is a sentiment often expressed in Scripture. "Before honor is humility." "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit." "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." [1] In the providential dealings of God, as recorded in his Word, we have many very remarkable instances of humbling a person's self under the mighty hand of God leading to deliverance from calamity, and restoration to prosperity. When the princes of Israel, on the desolations occasioned by the invasion of Shishak king of Egypt, "humbled themselves, and said, The Lord is righteous;" "the Lord saw that they had humbled themselves," and he said, by his prophet Shemaiah, "They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance." When their prince, king Rehoboam, "humbled himself, the wrath of God turned from him: also in Judah things went well." When the king of Nineveh and his people humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God lifted up to smite them, "He repented of the evil he had said he would do to them," and the impending stroke was averted. When Hezekiah "humbled himself for the pride of his heart," in the matter of the Babylonian ambassadors, the threatened wrath of the Lord came not on him. When Manasseh was, for his enormous transgressions, bound with fetters and taken to Babylon, he in affliction besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to him; and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." When even Ahab, to whom "there was none like, who did sell himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord," humbled himself, Jehovah said to Elijah, "Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days." And to notice but one other instance, when Nebuchadnezzar, who, for his pride, was

[1] Prov. xv. 33; xxix. 23. Luke xiv. 11.

bereft both of his reason and of his power, employed the first effort of returning intelligence in humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, "the glory of his kingdom, his honor and brightness returned to him; he was established in his kingdom; and excellent majesty was added to him." [1]

This part of the Divine government is beautifully described by Elihu. "To hide pride from man, he is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones which were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyer. If there be a messenger with him, one among a thousand, to show unto him His," that is, God's "uprightness; then he is gracious to him, and saith, Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray to God, and he shall be favorable to him; and he will see his face with joy. He looketh upon man; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." "If men be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions wherein they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure; but if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge."

Nor is the psalmist's description less striking and instructive. "Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High: therefore he brought down their heart with labor: they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted: their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." [2]

The Christian's humbling himself under the mighty hand of God

[1] 2 Chron. xii. 7, 12. Jonah ii. 5–10. 2 Chron. xxxii. 26; xxxiii. 12. 1 Kings xxi. 29. Dan. iv. 34–37.

[2] Job xxxiii. 17–29; xxxvi. 8–12. Psal. cvii. 10–22.

always leads to his exaltation. Frequently, the affliction, having served one of its leading purposes, which was to humble him, and make him humble himself before God, is removed, and prosperity comes in the room of adversity. At other times, though the affliction may not be removed, or though it may be one of those irreparable losses we so often meet with, the heaviness, the painful depression which it occasioned, is removed.

Humility brings in its train patience, long-suffering, and hope; and, even though not delivered from suffering, he who has humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, is so lifted up by that hand as to "joy in tribulation." "His heart is lifted up in the good ways of the Lord." The Christian, who, while he could not humble himself, could not bring his mind to God's mind, his will to God's will, was tossed as in a sea of trouble, is no sooner enabled to humble himself under the mighty hand of God, to kiss the rod, to say "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight," than the storm is turned into a calm; and it may be, amid unabated external suffering, he has perfect peace, submitting himself to God, staying himself on God.

It is the purpose of God ultimately to exalt his people far above the reach of evil, in all its forms and in all its degrees. The humble, patient suffering of his will, equally with active, persevering doing of his will, is the appointed way to that final exaltation; and the degree in which the people of God are to be exalted, will be proportioned to their attainments in holiness, among which, humbling themselves under his mighty hand occupies an important place. This is an exercise that not only precedes, but prepares for, that exaltation to which it is his purpose to raise them.

The exaltation promised as the result of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, is said to be exaltation "in due time." When the affliction has served its purpose, "when they shall confess their iniquity," says Jehovah, in reference to his cast-off people; when their uncircumcised hearts shall be humbled, "and they accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant." "In due time," in God's time. "Not thy fancied time," as Leighton says, "but his own wisely appointed time. Thou thinkest, I am sinking; if he help not now, it will be too late. He can let thee sink still lower, and yet bring thee up again. He doth but stay till the most fit time. 'He waiteth to be gracious.' Doth he wait, and wilt not thou? If he should see fit to keep us under a cloud all our days on the earth, what then? it is but a moment of wrath, to be succeeded by an endless life-time in his favor; it is but sorrow for a night, and in the due time comes joy in the morning; that eternal morning without clouds, to which no night succeeds forever."[1] So much for an illustration of the apostle's view of the Christian's state of affliction as a state of subjection to the mighty hand of God, and of the corresponding view of his duty in this state, and the motives which urge to its performance.

[1] Psal. xxx. 5.—"Non omnes intelligunt, quod scriptum est a Davide, Psal. xxx. 5. Quid igitur dicit? Nisi vehementer fallor hoc dicit: 'Benevolentia ipsius diu durat:' Contrarium illius quod præcedit 'momentum in ira ejus.' Affine est quod in Latio usitamus, ætatem vivere, pro, diu vivere."—DRUSIUS.

These remarks have been addressed almost exclusively to the people of God. But I cannot conclude this part of the subject without expressing my sympathy with those irreligious men who are under the mighty hand of God, and of offering them a word of counsel. It is an awful thing to be under the mighty hand of God, while we are lying under the curse of his holy law. Such a person is in the grasp of an almighty hand, which can, and which, unless a change take place in his spiritual state and character, will, cast him into hell. All he suffers now, is nothing in comparison to what he shall suffer forever and ever. The bed of sickness, languishing, and pain, is ill to bear. How will it be with you when you must make your bed in hell? God's hand is heavy now. What will it be then? He lays it on you *now*, irreligious sufferers, that he may not require to lay it on you *then*. For he has no pleasure in your death. Alas! how often does "God speak once, yea twice, yet man regardeth it not." Even when he lays his hand on men, few say, "Where is God my maker?" They do not pray to *him* when they are constrained to "howl upon their beds." Oh that they were wise![1] Hear the rod. Its voice to every thoughtless sufferer is, 'Humble thyself, acknowledge thy guilt, thy depravity, thy helplessness, and cry for mercy. Submit to the will of God.' There is no hope for thee but in this. Submit to his will, as to the way of salvation through his Son; as to the requisitions of his law, holy and good; as to the dispensations of his righteous and wise providence. Humble yourselves in submission to this will of God, and all will yet be well with you, well with you forever. No affliction will then be intolerable. Every affliction will produce sweet and salutary fruit; fruit to holiness, and the end will be everlasting life. But what will be the consequence if you do not humble yourselves under his mighty hand; if you do not unreservedly submit to the overtures of his mercy, to the injunctions of his law, to the appointments of his providence?

Take the truth in the forcible words of a divine of a former age: "His hand, to which ye will not submit, is a mighty, an almighty, hand. 'Have ye an arm like God? or can ye thunder with a voice like him?' He whose will you oppose is incontrollably powerful. His will must prevail one way or other, either with your will, or against it; either so as to bow and satisfy us, or so as to break and plague us; for 'my counsel,' saith he, 'shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.'[2] As to his dispensations, we may fret, we may wail, we may bark at them; but we cannot alter or avoid them. Sooner may we by our moans check the tides, or by our cries stop the sun in his course, than divert the current of affairs, or change the state of things established by God's high decree. What he layeth on, no hand can remove. What he hath destined, no power can reverse. Our anger, therefore, will be ineffectual; our patience will have no other fruit than to aggravate our guilt, and augment our grief. As to his commands, men may lift up themselves against him; they may fight stoutly; they may in a sort prove conquerors; but it will be a miserable victory, the trophies whereof will be erected in hell, and stand on the ruins of their happiness; for while they insult over abused

[1] Job xxxiii. 14; xxxv. 10. Hos. vii. 14. [2] Isa. xlvi. 12.

grace, they must fall under incensed justice. If God cannot fairly procure his will of men in the way of due obedience, he will surely execute his will upon them in the way of righteous vengeance; if we do not surrender our wills to the overtures of his goodness, we must submit our backs to the strokes of his anger. He must reign over us; if not as over loyal subjects to our comfort, yet as over stubborn rebels to our confusion; for this, in that case, will be our doom, and these will be the last words God will deign to spend upon us: 'Those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.'"[1]

"Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men be bowed down; and the Lord alone be exalted." "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?"[2] To all, then, whether saints or sinners, when visited with calamitous dispensations of providence, we proclaim, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

II.—SECOND VIEW OF AFFLICTION AND ITS DUTY.

Let us now contemplate, for a little, affliction in the second view here given us of it, as a state of anxiety and carefulness; the appropriate duty of the Christian in this state, casting all his care on God; and the motive for performing this duty, God cares for him.

§ 1.—*Affliction is a state of anxiety and carefulness.*

Let us, then, for a little, consider affliction as a state of carefulness; a state fitted to excite painful anxieties and fears. When the afflicted Christian is called to cast all his cares on God, it is obviously supposed that he has cares, many cares, distressing cares, cares which he feels that he cannot himself bear. The life of man, the life of the christian man, even in its most prosperous state, is not without its cares and anxieties. Its enjoyments are at once imperfect and uncertain. Man has by no means all the things necessary to his happiness, nor any one of them in the measure in which he feels to be desirable; so that he naturally wishes for what he has not, and his wishes, in proportion to their ardor, and the difficulties which seem to lie in the way of their being gratified, become painful anxieties. Besides, the tenure by which he holds most of these things is very precarious; they may soon, they may suddenly, be diminished, or entirely withdrawn from him; so that, if the mind is not under the influence of that thoughtlessness which blinds it to all possible or probable hazard, or of that enlightened religious principle which raises it above the fear of such hazards when distinctly discerned, even a

[1] Barrow. [2] Isa. ii. 10. Jer. xiii. 16, 21.

life of prosperity would seem necessarily to be a life of carefulness. But while every situation in human life may afford occasion for carefulness, there can be no doubt that the season of affliction is peculiarly calculated to excite painful anxieties. The mind gets into an anxious state; everything assumes a dark, discouraging, alarming aspect. 'How am I to sustain present evils, or how am I to escape from them? How am I to avert apparently coming evils? and, if they cannot be averted, How am I to endure them?' These are questions which force themselves on the suffering mind; and most sufferers will readily acknowledge that the fruitless attempt to get satisfactory answers to them, has often greatly aggravated the pressure of external calamity, and that the anxieties occasioned by affliction have been felt to be a more insupportable burden than the affliction itself.[1]

The case of affliction which the text naturally brings before the mind, that of a christian exposed to persecution on account of his religion, is one which is calculated to be peculiarly fertile in harassing cares and perplexing anxieties. 'Spoiled as I am already, or am likely soon to be, of my goods, how am I to meet my engagements, and provide things honest in the sight of all men? What is to become of my family, to provide for whom is one of the most clearly enjoined, strongly enforced, of christian duties? How am I to be enabled to sustain the sufferings to which I am likely to be exposed? How am I to be enabled distinctly to see my duty? How am I to be enabled determinedly to do my duty? I am afraid I shall not be able to stand in the evil day. I am afraid my faith will fail, and that I shall make shipwreck of a good conscience; and then, what will be the fearful result of this to the cause of truth? How will its enemies exult? How will its friends be ashamed? What will be the more fearful result of this to my own weak, guilty soul? The anguish of an outraged conscience, the frown of an insulted Saviour; and all this forever.' And anxieties of this kind could not be confined to the individual's own case; they naturally extended to the whole brotherhood, and to the great cause. This is the case, I apprehend, more immediately in the apostle's view; and it is easy to see that persons placed in these circumstances were likely to have anxieties, many anxieties, oppressive anxieties. But it is obvious that affliction in all its forms is a natural source of painful carefulness to all, even to the Christian. The questions, How shall I be strengthened to endure those afflictions? how shall I be enabled to conduct myself aright towards God and man under them? am I ever to be delivered from them? and if so, how? and if not, what are likely to be their consequences to me and to others? These are inquiries which are involuntarily pressed on the consideration of the mind, and it becomes careful and troubled, perplexed and fearful, oppressed and downcast.

[1] This state of mind is very beautifully described by the poet:—

"Magno curarum fluctuat æstu,
Atque animum celerem nunc huc nunc dividit illuc,
In partesque rapit varias, perque omnia versat."—VIRGIL.

§ 2.—*The duty of the Christian under affliction is to "cast all his care on God."*

The duty of the Christian under the pressure of affliction, viewed in this aspect, is to "cast all his care on God." The language is figurative, strongly figurative. These harassing cares and anxieties are represented as a burden, which is felt to be oppressively heavy; and the sinking sufferer is represented as so transferring them to God, as to obtain relief from their painful pressure. The figure is still more fully brought out in the passage in the Old Testament Scriptures here referred to, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."[1] Casting our cares on God, is descriptive of such actings of the mind towards God as shall have an effect in giving it a relief, analogous to that ease of body which the transference of a load to another person procures to him who was previously bent down by it. The figurative expression "cast," not lay, seems to intimate that the duty enjoined is one that requires an effort; and experience tells us it is no easy matter to throw off the burden of carefulness. To describe the state of mind indicated by this figurative expression, and show how the Christian is to find his way into it, are the objects I have in view in the following observations.

To think rightly on this subject, it is of primary importance that we have distinct ideas respecting the true nature of those cares, *all* of which the afflicted Christian is called on to cast on God. There are cares and anxieties which originate in cherishing false views as to what is necessary and conducive to happiness in ourselves and others: and in unlawful, inordinate desires, corresponding with these false views. There are very many such cares and anxieties in the world. Indeed, they are all but universal. "Surely every man walketh in a vain show; they disquiet themselves in vain."[2] Men are anxious to obtain what, if they thought and felt rightly, they would never have desired; and that is the object of fear, which, were they not blinded by passion or false views of interest, would occasion no alarm, but rather be the object of hope. This is the character of the greater part of the worldling's anxieties, and it is the character also of but too many of the Christian's. These cares are not to be cast on God: they are to be cast away from us. We are not to go to him in the hope that he will gratify such desires, disappoint such fears, realize such hopes. To ask him to do this were to insult him. If we take them to him at all, and we cannot do better, it ought to be as his enemies and ours, to slay them before his face.

There are other cares which we are not warranted to cast on God, for another reason. God has laid them on us, and he expects that we shall bear them. God would have his people without carefulness, in the sense of painful, useless anxiety. But he would not have them without thoughtfulness, in the sense of considerate reflection. We are bound to exercise those faculties God has given us, for discovering what is truth and what is falsehood, what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. We are not to resign ourselves to mental inactivity, and to expect that, in some miraculous

[1] Psal. lv. 22. [2] Psal. xxxix. 6.

way, without our own agency, God is to lead us unto truth, and preserve us from error; show us what is duty, and what is sin; give us what is fitted to make us happy, and defend us from all that is fitted to injure us. It is in the eager, I had almost said anxious, employment of our faculties as intelligent beings, on the revelation which God has made of his will, in his word and in his providence, that we are to expect to find out what is the course of conduct we should follow in any particular case; and it is in the persevering, diligent employment of our faculties as active beings, carrying into effect the conclusion to which we have arrived, that we are to expect to obtain the desired results. We are warranted to look up to him for the aids of his good Spirit, both in our inquiries and in our exertions. But we are not to expect him to do that directly which his infinitely wise plan, and our real interests, equally require should be done by us. The apostle does not mean to encourage inconsideration, indolence, or presumption, when he enjoins Christians to cast all their cares on God. It has been well said, 'We must not cast our work on God, and presume that he will save us in the way of sloth and carnal indulgence; on the contrary, we are commanded to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling."' It is only in "well-doing" that we can "commit the keeping of our souls to God."[1]

The cares and anxieties spoken of here have a reference to what properly belongs to God, what lies beyond the range of human agency. All a Christian's cares, of this kind, whether in a state of affliction or otherwise, whether respecting secular or spiritual things, the body or the soul, time or eternity, must refer, I apprehend, either to duties or to events.

As to duties, the Christian is apt to be anxious and careful about the discovery of what is duty, and the discharge of what is known to be duty. In regard to the first, he is carefully to use the means God has appointed for discovering his duty. He is to read his Bible, he is to attend to the aspect of Providence, he is to compare the one with the other, he is to ask the guidance of the Spirit, he is to guard against false biases, he is to see that his eye be single, that his whole body may be full of light; but he is not to be anxious as if, doing all this, he shall yet be left in darkness, and allowed to fall into error or sin. He is to cast all such cares on the Lord. They refer to his work, and he has pledged himself to do it; and we may be assured he will not fail to do as he has said.

But the Christian may be anxious also about the performance of known duty. In this case he is carefully to guard against temptations to neglect duty; but he is not to indulge in any anxiety as to whether he will be enabled, trusting in God, to perform any duty, however difficult, to which God may be pleased to call him. That is God's concern; why does he burden himself with it? He will look after the accomplishment of his own promise—"My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in weakness;" and let the Christian, in the full assurance of this, with an earnest, determined, but unanxious mind, set about the performance of the difficult, perhaps, at the time, apparently impossible, work.

[1] Phil. ii. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 19.

As to events, they, properly speaking, belong entirely to God. Man proposes; God disposes. To man some events seem desirable, others undesirable; and, so far as we are concerned in the matter, we are to use such lawful means as seem to us best fitted to further events, which, with the widest and most accurate view we can take of them, seem to be desirable; and, when we have done this, anxiety should cease. Our care should be cast upon God, who "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," whose "work is perfect," "most honorable and glorious."[1] This is the duty of the Christian respecting all the events of time, and all the events of eternity, both in reference to himself individually, and to all with whom he is connected; with regard to the church, and with regard to the world. Respecting *duty*, we ought to cast on Him all our care and anxiety as to skill to discover it, and strength to perform it; respecting *events*, we ought to trust him with them entirely.

In order to thus casting our cares on God, there are plainly required three things:—1. A persuasion that God has complete control in reference to those things which excite our anxiety; 2. A persuasion that he will use this control in the best manner, abstractly considered; and 3. A persuasion that he will use this control in the best possible manner, so far as we are concerned.

(1.) *A persuasion that God has power to control what excites our anxiety.*

I could not get rid of painful anxiety by casting it on God, if I did not believe he could sustain it. What lies at the very foundation here is, the conviction, that God is Sovereign of the universe, uncontrolled and uncontrollable, "whose kingdom rules over all," "who can do everything," "whose arm none can stay, to whom none dare say, What doest thou?" whose ends his enemies further by opposing them, who "makes their wrath to praise him, and who restrains the remainder thereof."[2]

(2.) *A persuasion that God will employ his controlling power in the best possible way.*

But though I had entire conviction of the Divine power, I could not cast my care, all my care, on him, unless I believed that his power was guided by wisdom and righteousness, and influenced by benignity. A belief in the existence of a being possessed of infinite power, if I were not sure that this being is possessed of infinite wisdom and righteousness, would increase, not diminish, my anxieties. But the clear apprehension that He who has all things under his control is perfect in knowledge, infinite in wisdom, glorious in holiness, plentiful in justice, and full of kindness, must persuade me that his management of everything must be the best possible.

[1] Eph. i. 11. Psal. cxi. 3.

[2] Psal. ciii. 19; lxxvi. 10. Dan. iv. 35.

(3.) *A persuasion that he will employ his controlling power in the best possible way for us.*

It might be thought that this conviction of absolute intellectual and moral perfection, in combination with almighty power, should be quite enough to enable me, quite enough morally to compel me, to cast all my care on God; that in the presence of such convictions, anxieties of every kind would cease. But no! I am a sinner. I have offended this infinitely powerful, and wise, and excellent Being, and the very excellence of his nature may render certain those events, anxiety about which can only be quieted by an assurance that they never shall take place. I must be persuaded that this control which he possesses will be exercised not only in the best possible way in the abstract, but in the best way for me. In other words, I must know and believe him to be my Friend. I must know that he is "pacified towards me for all the iniquity which I have done." I must believe his own testimony, that he has no pleasure in my death; that he is "in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" that "for the great love wherewith he loves men, he blesses them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings." I must, on the faith of his testimony, lay hold of his promise, and believe that to me, trusting in him, he will do all that he has said, make all things work for my good, and bestow on me "the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory."

Wherever there is, and in the degree in which there is, the possession of this threefold persuasion, we learn to cast our cares on God; and we find that, by doing so, we are relieved of them. When we are thus "anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make our requests known to God, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." It is then, in believing prayer, that the afflicted, anxious Christian, is to cast his cares on God.

"This is the way," as good Leighton says, "to walk contentedly and cheerfully homewards, leaning and resting all the way on him who is both our guide and our guard, our wisdom and our strength, who hath us and all our good in his gracious hand. The more tender and weak we are, the more tender will he be of us, the more strong will he be in us. He feeds his flock as a shepherd, and the weakest he is most careful of. They go in his arms and bosom, and it is easy for the feeblest so to go."

In reference to events, the more completely we rid ourselves of all anxiety, we act the more reasonably and wisely. It is entirely his province to manage them. If we meddle with it, and we are constantly meddling with it, we displease him, and disquiet ourselves. This sin carries its punishment in its bosom. "If thou wilt," says the pious prelate, "be struggling with that which belongs not to thee, and poising at that burden which is not thine, what wonder, yea, I may say, what pity, if thou fall under it? Is it not just, if thou wilt do for thyself, and bear for thyself what thy Lord calls for to bear for thee, is it not just that thou feel the weight of it to thy cost?"

There is just one other thought to which I would solicit your attention before closing this part of the subject. The Christian must

beware of laying his cares on any but God. He must cast all his cares on God. He may seek the sympathy and the advice of his fellow-Christians; but he must never cast his cares, or place his confidence on them. They cannot bear the burden. They are obliged to cast their own cares on God. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." He well understood the blessed art of casting all his care on God, who said, "My soul, wait thou only on God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Ye people, place your confidence in him continually; pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance" with God, as the object of confidence, "they are altogether lighter than vanity." [1]

Finally, here, in the right state of mind under affliction, the two things recommended by the apostle must be conjoined, "Humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God," and "Casting all our cares upon him." Our self-abasement must not lead to despondency, but to deeper dependence, greater confidence; and our reliance on God, and consequent ease of mind, must not be presumptuous. A sense of sin must not prevent the use of privilege, and a continuous enjoyment of privilege must not diminish self-abasement.

§ 3.—*The motive to casting our care on God is, that he cares for us.*

It is time now that I proceed to turn your attention to the motive by which the apostle urges the Christian to cast all his care on God. "Casting all your care on God; for he careth for you." And here I shall very briefly state the evidence of this truth, that God cares for his people; and then show how the belief of this truth should lead them to cast their care on him.

It is quite obvious that the apostle is not here speaking of the general providential care which God has of men as his creatures, but of the peculiar care which he has of those who are in a peculiar sense his children, his people, his inheritance, his purchased possession. He cares for them in another way than he does for the world. On those who are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, by a spiritual separation, and who are made obedient to the truth and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, are bestowed peculiar "heavenly and spiritual blessings;" to them who have obtained like precious faith with the apostles, are given "exceeding great and precious promises." It is the care of God for this peculiar people, that I mean to establish as a ground why this peculiar people should cast all their care on him.

[1] Psal. lxii. 5–9.—Hengstenberg very justly remarks that the words "Pour ye out your heart before him—God is a refuge for us"—are, as to sense, quite parallel to that before us.—Amat gives the meaning of "pour out"—'completely empty your heart of all that is distressing it'—pour it *out* before the Lord! What a beautiful example have we of "pouring out the heart before God," "casting all care on him," in Psal. cxlii. 1–5. Hannah, too,—1 Sam. i. 10–17—shows us what the mental exercise is, expressed by these significant figures—and her experience shows how "he on whom we cast our cares" "cares *for* us," and relieves us of our cares.

It deserves notice that the word "careth" in this last clause is a word of a very different meaning from that used in the first clause, though rendered by the same English word.[1] The word in the first clause denotes painful anxiety; in the second, kind interest. It is said, "the hireling fleeth when the wolf cometh; for he careth not for the sheep." It is said, Judas "cared not for the poor."[2] "He cares for you" is equivalent to, 'He takes a kind interest in you.'

Now that God does, must, take a peculiar and most benignant interest in his people, will be very plain, if we attend for a moment to the peculiar relation in which he stands to them, the peculiar works he has done for them, the peculiar privileges he has bestowed on them, and the peculiar "exceeding great and precious promises" he has made to them.

What is the relation in which God stands to them? He is their God and Father; they are his people and children, in a sense quite peculiar. They were "predestinated to the adoption of children;" and when he called them out of the world, by the power of his Spirit attending the invitation of his word, he said, "I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." "Behold," may "this chosen generation, this holy nation, this peculiar people," say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!"[3] The title is not an empty name. There is great force in the apostle's argument, "If children then heirs."[4] If you stand in the relation of children to God, you may be sure of the treatment of children. Is it possible that our Father in heaven should not care for his children? "If ye, being evil," says our Lord, "know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your Father in heaven give good gifts to them that ask him?" "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. He knows their frame; he remembers they are dust."[5]

What has God done for, what has he given to, his peculiar people? He "chose them before the foundation of the world." He "commended his love to them, in that, when they were yet sinners, Christ died for them." He "spared not his Son, but delivered him up for their offences, and raised him again for their justification," and set him at his own right hand, that, ever living to make intercession for them, he might be able to save them to the uttermost. For them he poured out the Holy Ghost in his miraculous and inspiring influence, and diffused his gospel and established his ordinances throughout the earth. This is a specimen of what he has done for them. And what has he given them? He has "blessed them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings;" he has bestowed on them "redemption in Christ through his blood, according to the riches of his grace;" he has made them "accepted in the beloved;" he has conferred on them "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not, reserved in heaven for them," while he keeps them by his power, through faith, unto salvation; he has given them the Holy Scriptures as the charter, and the Holy Spirit, in his sanctifying and comforting influences, as

[1] Μέριμναν—Μέλει.
[2] John x. 13; xii. 6.
[3] Eph. i. 5. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. 1 John iii. 1.
[4] Rom. viii. 17.
[5] Matt. vii. 11. Psal. ciii. 13, 14.

the seal and the earnest, of their inheritance; he has sent forth his angels, who excel in strength, as "ministering spirits, to minister to them as heirs of this great salvation;" he has delivered them from the present evil world, and from the power of the wicked one, and given them "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." Surely he who has done all this for them, and given all this to them, does, must, care for them. For these "gifts and callings are without repentance." He "rests in his love," and is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." [1]

Still farther, what has he promised them, or rather, what has he not promised them, which could show his care for them? He has promised that he will "withhold no good thing from them;" that "it shall be well with them;" that "their desire shall be granted," and that "their hope shall be gladness." He has declared that theirs is the world, and that they "shall inherit all things;" and promised to "supply all their need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." He has a promise which meets every anxiety which can arise in their hearts. Are they anxious as to strength to perform duty? he says, "My grace is sufficient for you." "God will work in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in my name." Are they anxious as to guidance in difficulty? "I will lead the blind in a way that they know not; I will make darkness light before them." "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shouldest go." Are they afraid of falling before their spiritual enemies, and ultimately coming short of eternal life? He who is the Father's substantial image says, "I give to my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of my Father's hand." "God who is faithful, will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able to bear; and will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "Satan shall be bruised under your feet shortly." And as to events; Are they anxious about affliction? "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, in seven no evil shall touch thee." "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the floods they shall not overflow thee. When thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flames kindle on thee." "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." In every situation in life fitted to excite anxiety there are appropriate promises which I cannot stop to enumerate. To his people, when in poverty, in famine, bereaved of relations, spoiled of their possessions, misrepresented and calumniated, promises singularly suited to their circumstances are made, all proving that he cares for them, that "in all their afflictions he is afflicted," and that "they who touch them, touch the apple of his eye." [2]

Are they anxious about death, and about what is to follow death?

[1] Eph. i. 4. Rom. v. 8; viii. 32; iv. 25. Heb. vii. 25. Eph. i. 3, 6, 7. 1 Pet. i. 4, 5. Eph. i. 13. Psal. xci. 11. Heb. i. 14. Gal. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 16. Rom. xi. 29.

[2] Psal. lxxxiv. 11. Eccles. viii. 8. Isa. iii. 10. Psal. cxlv. 19. Prov. x. 24, 28. 1 Cor. iii. 22. Rom. iv. 13. Rev. xxi. 7. Phil. iv. 19. 2 Cor. xii. 9. Phil. ii. 13. Zech. x. 12. Isa. xlii. 16. Psal. xxxii. 8. John x. 28, 29. 1 Cor. x. 13. Rom. xvi. 20. Job. v. 19. Isa. xlii. 2; lxiii. 9. Rom. viii. 28. Zech. ii. 8.

He shows that he cares for them by promising, that when they "walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be with them; his rod and his staff, they shall sustain them." "He will swallow up death in victory." "I will ransom them from the power of the grave! I will redeem them from death. O death! I will be thy plagues: O grave! I will be thy destruction." "This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; and death shall be swallowed up in victory." The Saviour shall come from heaven, and "change these vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body;" and they "shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and they shall be forever with the Lord." "He who testifieth these things is a true and faithful witness." He cannot be deceived; he cannot deceive. "He is not a man that he should lie." He means all he says; he can and will do all he promises.[1]

Does he not, then, care for his people? Do not the relations he has assumed towards them, the works he has performed for them, the privileges he has bestowed on them, and the promises so exceeding great and precious that he has made about them and to them, abundantly prove the assertion in the text, "He cares for them?"

It will not require many words to show, that this truth, so abundantly demonstrated, is a most powerful and appropriate motive to the Christian's casting his care, all his care, upon God. Why should he allow the burden that so oppresses and depresses him, that so interferes both with his duty and with his comfort, to remain on him? He knows very well that these anxieties can be of no use to him; they refer to matters that he cannot control. His anxieties, however intense, do not bring him one whit nearer the object of his hope, or remove him one whit farther from the object of his fear. But, to obtain relief from anxiety, I must not only be convinced that my anxiety is useless. A conviction of this, if I do not see some way of getting rid of the evils which occasion it, will but fix the burden more firmly on me. But the Christian who knows that God cares for him, knows that his anxieties are not only useless, they are needless. God who has the entire management of those matters which excite his anxieties, God cares for him. And who is this who cares for the Christian? He is the all-wise, "the only wise God," who never can be deceived as to what is the Christian's true interest, and who knows how to make "all things work together for good." He never can fall into any mistake as to what is good for his people, nor as to the means best fitted for securing this good to them. Then he is God Almighty, the all-powerful God. "Whatsoever he pleaseth, that doeth he in heaven, in the earth, and in all deep places." He never can want power to execute what his wisdom deems to be best for those he cares for. When a Christian is "afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as the grass," surely it is in momentary forgetfulness that He who cares for him is "the Lord his maker, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; the Lord God who divided the seas, whose waters roared; the Lord

[1] Psal. xxiii. 4. Isa. xxv. 8. Hos. xiii. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 53–57. Phil. iii. 20, 21. 1 Thess. iv. 17.

of hosts is his name. Then he is God, ever present, omnipresent; nothing can overtake you in his absence. The connection in the parallel passage in Philippians iv. 5, 6, deserves to be marked. "The Lord is at hand; be careful for nothing." Then still farther; He is "the God of all grace;" "the Father of mercies." He who cares for you, has his wisdom and power influenced and guided by infinite love, infinite love to you. Hear his own words, which are as true in reference to every one of his people individually, as in reference to their collective body, the church. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee." This love will keep wisdom ever wakeful, power ever active, in reference to the true interests of its objects. Is not anxiety, then, on the part of the Christian, a very needless, and therefore a very unreasonable thing? Surely it is very unwise in him not to cast his care on God.[1]

But it is worse than unwise, it is ungrateful and undutiful. When God says, 'Leave these matters which you cannot manage to my management,' if we refuse what is it but to insult our Divine benefactor by discovering doubts of his sincerity, or of his wisdom, or of his power? Whether would the ingratitude or the folly of the Levite of Mount Ephraim have been greater, if he had met the generous invitation of the hospitable old man of Gibeah, "Let all thy wants lie on me, only lodge not in the street," with a sullen refusal? And when the greatest and best of all beings says to us, who are but dust and ashes, 'Let all your wants lie upon me,' wants, we well know, we cannot supply, but he can, where shall we find words to describe the baseness and the absurdity of putting away from us so generous, so needed a boon? Is it a fitting return for all his kindness, to insist on keeping hold of a burden from which he is willing to release us, when getting rid of that burden is necessary to enable us to yield him the cheerful, ready, joyful service he so well deserves? Surely when he says, 'I would have you without carefulness, that you may serve me without fear in righteousness and holiness all the days of your lives,' the sense of his kindness and the desire of his glory should equally lead us to comply with the command, "Cast all your care on God." Indeed, wherever the proposition, 'God the infinitely powerful, wise, and benignant Sovereign of the universe cares for me, is interested in my welfare, and has pledged himself to secure it,' is understood and believed, in the degree in which it is understood and believed, it does, it must, banish carefulness and anxiety from the mind. Here, as in so many other cases, it is with a man according to his faith. Oh, how happy, oh, how holy, should we be! how easy should labor be, how light affliction! could we but, believing that God cares for us, "cast all our care on him," saying, "I am poor and needy; but the Lord thinketh on me! Thou art my help and deliverer, O my God!"[2]

Thus have I turned your attention to affliction as a state calculated to excite anxiety and carefulness; to the afflicted Christian's duty in reference to this view of affliction,—to cast all his anxieties on God; and to the motive urging him to this course,—God cares for him.

This is the duty of the Christian at all times, and the motive is

[1] Psal. cxxxv. 6. Isa. li. 12, 15; xlix. 15. [2] Psal xl. 17.

equally powerful in all circumstances. The inward ear of the Christian should ever be open to these words of the great Master, so full of wisdom, so full of love:—"Take no thought; be not careful," anxious "for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor for your body, what ye shall put on: Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought," by anxiety, "can add one cubit to his stature," or, as it has been explained, "one moment to his life? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed as one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things the Gentiles seek), for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."[1]

There is a class, a large class of men, and it is very likely there are some of them here, to whom I can address neither the exhortation nor the encouragement in the text in the true sense, that which I have endeavored to bring out to you; to whom I dare not say, Cast your care, all your care, ay, any of your care, on God; to whom I cannot say, God cares for *you* in the way in which he cares for his own, for them who know and love him, for those I refer to are none of his. His creatures they are, but his disobedient creatures; his subjects, but his rebellious subjects; they are not his children, they are not his people. There are men whose anxieties are all engaged about worldly, many of them about sinful, objects. Even with their very low notions of the Divine character, they themselves would be ashamed to take their cares and anxieties to God in prayer, and try to cast them on him. They feel that it would be to insult him to do so. Their inward feeling is, the less God hears of such things the better. They are cares he would never take off their hand, and undertake for. And though there is a sense in which God's mercies, God's tender mercies, are over all his works, in which he cares for all; yet, with regard to those who are living in unbelief and disobedience, it is quite plain that, remaining in that state, what they have to depend on is not pledged covenant love. Their dependence, if they have any, must be a presumptuous dependence on insulted kindness, or severely tried patience and long-suffering. Such persons are proper objects of deep sympathy, shutting themselves out, as they do, from all rational support and consolation, amid the anxieties, and perplexities, and sorrows of life. Oh! that we could awaken even one such person to carefulness about that of which he has no care—the

[1] Luke xii. 22–32.

salvation of the soul; to anxiety about that regarding which he is not at all anxious—the miseries of eternity. Oh! that we could hear him, like Ephraim, bemoaning himself and saying, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Who can dwell with devouring fire? who can dwell with the everlasting burnings? How shall I come before the Lord? How shall I stand before this holy Lord God? Oh! how shall I escape, or how shall I endure the wrath to come? What, what must I do to be saved?" Then when he is beginning to despair we should begin to hope of him. Then should we say, with all the intensity of earnestness we could throw into our language and voice,—for however desirable such anxiety is, in comparison of stupid inconsideration or presumptuous confidence, its continuance is not a desirable thing; the sooner it is removed, if aright removed, the sooner it is got quit of, if safely disposed of, the better,—then we should say, Poor overburdened one, cast thy care on God, the God of salvation. He cares for thee, he alone can release thee. In the belief of the truth respecting his gracious character, manifested in consistency with, in glorious illustration of, his immaculate holiness and infinite justice in the atoning death of his Son, the just One, in the room of the unjust, you may obtain, you shall obtain relief at once, from a burden of guilt, which will certainly, if unremoved, sink your soul to hell, as well as from a burden of anxiety, which, if unremoved, may lay your body in an untimely grave. And in getting relief from that anxiety, a foundation is laid for getting relief from all anxieties; and henceforward we could with unfaltering voice address to him the words of the text, in all the blissful immeasurable breadth and depth of meaning which belongs to them. "Cast all your care on God, for he cares for you." Oh! that it may be so with some poor thoughtless sinner, anxious about everything but that about which, above all other things, he has cause to be anxious. Amen.

NOTE A, p. 715.

The following views of affliction, in a work not likely to come into the hands of many of my readers, discover so deep and accurate an acquaintance with human nature, scripture doctrine, and religious experience, that I count on thanks for giving them a place here:—

"That supposed greatness of soul which considers suffering as a plaything, upon which one should throw himself with manly courage, is not to be met with on the territory of Scripture; upon that, everywhere, appear faint, weak, and dissolving hearts, finding their strength and consolation only in God. This circumstance arises from more than one cause—

"I. Suffering has quite another aspect to the members of God's church than to the world. While the latter regard it only as the effect of accident, which one should meet with manly courage, the pious man recognizes in every trial the visitation of an angry God, a chastisement for his sins. This is to him the real sting of the suffering, from which it derives its power to pierce into the marrow and bone. 'Rightly to feel sin,' says Luther, 'is the torture of all tortures.' He who considers suffering in that light cannot, without impiety, attempt to cast it to the winds. He must regard it as his duty to allow it to go to his heart, and if this is not the case, even that must become again the object of his pungent sorrow. To make light of tribulation is all one, in the reckoning of Scripture, with making light of God.

"II. The tenderer the heart, the deeper the pain. Living piety makes the heart soft and tender, refines all its sensibilities, and, consequently, takes away the power of resistance which the world possesses from the roughness of its heart. Many sources of pain are opened up in the Christian, which are closed in the ungodly. Love is much more deeply wounded by hatred than hatred itself; righteousness sees wickedness in a quite different light from what wickedness itself does; a soft heart has goods to lose which an hard one never possessed.

"III. The pious man has a friend in heaven, and, on that account, no reason to be violently overcome by his sorrow. He permits the floods of this quietly to pass over him, gives nature its free spontaneous course, knowing well that, besides the natural principle, there is another also existing in him, which always unfolds its energy the more, the more that the former has its rights reserved to it, that according to the depths of the pain, is the height of the joy which is derived from God—that every one is consoled after the measure in which he has borne suffering—that the meat never comes but from the eater, and honey from the terrible. On the contrary, whosoever lives in the world without God, he perceives that for him all is lost, when he is lost himself. He girds himself up, gnashes at his pain, does violence to nature, seeks thereby to divert himself, and to gain from nature on the one side what it abstracts from him on the other, and thus he succeeds in obtaining the mastery over his pain, so long as God pleases.

"IV. The pious man has no reason to prevent himself and others from seeing into his heart. His strength is in God, and so he can lay open his weakness. The ungodly man, on the other hand, considers it as a reproach to look upon himself in his weakness, and to be looked upon by others in it. Even when smarting with pain inwardly, he feigns freedom from it so long as he can.

"What is the proper place of sufferings, is manifest from the consequences to both classes. The pious man, while he regards all suffering as a punishment, takes that as the means of leading him to repentance, and derives from it the fruit of righteousness. He, on the other hand, who looks upon suffering merely as the sport of accident, thereby deprives himself of all blessing from it; and while, in this respect, he is not the better for his suffering, he is decidedly the worse in another. He, therefore, only throws himself on his own resources, only raises himself above his suffering, awakening as much as possible the fancy of his own worth, dignity, and excellence, and, in the same proportion that he calls pride into exercise, his love decays—hardness becomes his inseparable companion, so that he, in reality, feeds upon his own fat, and quenches his thirst with his own heart's blood; and the question here also is applicable, 'What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' But suffering, when borne with faith, serves to free the heart of its natural hardness, to make it soft, and open it to love.

"Finally, it is possible, even at so dear a cost, to find consolation out of God only for smaller sufferings. While nothing can happen amiss to the righteous, however much may befall him of evil—for he strengthens himself in God, whose power is infinite—the man who trusts in himself bears up only so long as 'fate,' or in truth, he who sends the affliction permits. Every moment he may be precipitated into the abyss of despair. He who never fainted, who used to mock at the faintings of believers, and to speak in a contemptuous tone of the 'plaintive psalms,' must then feel utterly undone. Human strength, and whatever besides he can summon to his aid, is still but a limited resource; it finds its proper antagonist only in what wounds the heel, and gives way when the resistance is too strong and violent to be contended with on feigned ground. Nothing is better fitted to show the insufficiency of all human power, in the struggle against suffering, than the valuable confession of King Frederick II., who spared no cost to elevate this power, and whose great and mighty soul certainly did the utmost that can generally be accomplished in that field. He says, among other places in the Ep. to D'Alembert, sec. 12, p. 9: 'It is unhappy, that all who suffer must flatly contradict Zeno; as there is none but will confess pain to be a great evil.' P. 12: 'It is noble to raise one's self above the disagreeable accidents to which we are exposed, and a moderate stoicism is the only means of consolation for the unfortunate. But whenever the stone, the gout, or the bull of Phalaris mix in the scene, the frightful shrieks which escape from the sufferers leave no doubt that pain is a real evil.' Again, p. 16: 'When a misfortune presses us, which merely affects our person, self-love makes a point of honor to withstand vigorously this misfortune; but the moment we suffer an injury, which is forever irreparable, there is nothing left for us in Pandora's box which can bring consolation, except, perhaps for a man of my advanced years, the strong conviction that I must soon be with those who have gone before me (*i. e.* in the land of nothingness). The heart is conscious of a wound. The stoic freely confesses, 'I should feel no pain, but I do feel it against my will; it consumes, it lacerates me; an internal feeling overcomes my strength, and extorts from me complaints and fruitless groans.'"—HENGSTENBERG's Commentary on the Psalms. Vol. i. p. 90–92

DISCOURSE XXIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT ENEMY—HIS DUTY IN REFERENCE TO HIM, AND HIS ENCOURAGEMENT TO DISCHARGE IT.

1 Pet. v. 8–11.—Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a little while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you: to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

There is, perhaps, no article of revealed truth which has been more generally ridiculed by infidels, and probably, for that reason more frequently attempted to be explained away by philosophizing Christians, than the doctrine of the existence and agency of evil spirits. That among professed Christians highly absurd notions on this subject have been entertained, and to a certain extent, are still entertained, I am not disposed to question: but surely revelation cannot be fairly charged with the errors and absurdities of those who profess to believe it, unless it can be satisfactorily proved that it gives sanction to these errors and absurdities.

In the present instance it will be no difficult task to show that no such sanction is afforded, and that in the doctrine of the existence and agency of evil spirits, as taught in the Holy Scriptures, there is nothing irrational or ridiculous. For what is their doctrine on this subject? It may be thus briefly stated: 'There exists a numerous race of unembodied intelligent beings, occupying a higher place than man in the general scale of existence, who have lost the moral integrity in which they were created, and who, though under the control of the supreme Providence, are constantly engaged in an attempt, by a variety of methods, and particularly by influencing, in a malignant manner, the minds of men, to uphold and extend the empire of evil in the universe of God.' Now, what principle of reason, what appearance in nature, what well-established fact, what declaration of Scripture, is contradicted by this doctrine? I know of none. Let us look at the subject a little more closely.

That there should be morally imperfect, that is, wicked, creatures, in a world which owes its origin and continued existence to an all-perfect Being, infinite in power and wisdom, holiness and benignity; and that a being, capable of moral judgment, and possessed of free agency, should refuse the greatest good, and choose the greatest evil, are mysterious facts, for which no man can fully account, but of which surely no rational man can seriously doubt. Every man has their

evidence, alas! but too abundant, around him and within him. Man certainly is a depraved intelligent being; and if it be certain that there are depraved embodied spirits, it would be difficult to prove that there cannot be depraved unembodied spirits.

The mode in which these immaterial agents influence human character, and conduct, and destiny, may safely be acknowledged to be inexplicable; but the fact that they do possess and exert such influence, is not on this ground, if supported by appropriate and adequate evidence, incredible. The mode in which one human mind influences another, though no sane person can doubt of the fact, is involved in equal mystery. It is not more wonderful, nor on sufficient evidence more difficult to be believed, in some points of view it is less so, that one spiritual being should act on another, without the intervention of bodily organs, than that by certain conventional sounds conveyed to the ear, or certain arbitrary characters presented to the eye, the thoughts and feelings of one embodied spirit should be communicated to another embodied spirit, and become the instruments of altering opinion, exciting desire, stimulating to action.

The agency of the evil spirits on the human mind is no more inconsistent with the freedom of human action, than the influence exerted by objects presented to the mind by the senses, or by the reasonings and persuasions of our fellow-men; and to him to whom nothing can be difficult, since the resources of his power and wisdom are infinite and inexhaustible, there can be no more difficulty in overruling the agency of devils, than in overruling the agency of wicked men, to the promotion of the great ends of his righteous and benignant government.

These remarks go no farther, and were intended to go no farther, than to show that the doctrine of the existence and agency of evil spirits is not, abstractly considered, an absurd tenet; that the attempt to put it down by ridicule, is altogether unworthy of men who lay claim to the honorable appellation of philosophers, lovers of wisdom; and that there is no necessity to have recourse to metaphor and allegory to explain away those passages of Scripture which, in their obvious and literal sense, explicitly teach this doctrine.

The evidence of the existence and agency of evil spirits is to be sought for in the Holy Scriptures. It is entirely a matter of supernatural revelation; and I have no hesitation in asserting, that such evidence is to be found there in such abundance and explicitness, that an unprejudiced reader, who believes the authenticity and inspiration of the sacred volume, and interprets its declarations on the principles which he applies to written language generally, will find it as difficult to doubt of the existence and doings of such a being as Satan or the devil, and his subordinate agents, as of the existence and doings of such men as Moses and Samuel, Peter or Paul.

The passage before us is one, out of a multitude, which clearly proves the existence and wide extent of malignant spiritual agency; and, in common with the most of such passages, shows that this doctrine is, like the doctrines of revelation generally, not a mere matter of curiosity or speculation, but calculated and intended to exert a powerful and a salutary influence, in forming the character and guiding

the conduct of Christians during their present disciplinary and preparatory state. The fact is distinctly asserted, that the "devil, their adversary, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." This assertion is made, that they may be induced to resist him; and, that in order to their successfully resisting him, they may be sober, and watchful, and steadfast in the faith; and they are encouraged, under the sufferings in which the attempts of their powerful, and crafty, and cruel, and active adversary may involve them, by the consideration, that such sufferings have been the common lot of the faithful in all ages, that they have been enabled to endure them, and in due season have been delivered from them, and by the promise of a divine support under, and a glorious triumph over, them. To these interesting topics, then, it is my intention to turn your minds, in the remaining part of the discourse. The Christian's adversary; the Christian's duty in reference to this adversary; and the Christian's encouragement while engaged in performing this duty.

I.—THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT ENEMY.

Let us first, then, consider the statement made respecting the Christian's adversary. "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." There are two questions which here require attention. Who is this adversary? and what is here stated in reference to him?

CHAP. I.—WHO IS HE? THE DEVIL.

To the first question, who is this adversary? the answer is, he is "the devil." The word translated devil, properly signifies accuser, slanderer, calumniator, and is given to the chief of evil spirits as an appropriate designation. The same being is termed "satan," a word of similar meaning with devil, signifying enemy or accuser; "the wicked one," to mark his depravity generally, and especially his malignity; "belial," a term signifying low, abject, describing both his character and situation; "the tempter;" "the god and the prince of this world;" "the chief of the demons;" "beelzebub," the lord of the flies, "the prince of the power of the air;" "apollyon," the destroyer; "he that hath the power of death;" "the great dragon;" and "the old serpent." [1]

With regard to this very remarkable being, our information, all of course derived from revelation, though very limited, is abundantly distinct. He is a being of the angelic order, formed, as all intelligent beings were, and must have been, in a state of moral integrity, who, at a period anterior to the fall of man, in consequence of violating the Divine law, in a manner of which we are not informed, was, along with a large number of other spirits, who, it would appear, in consequence of being seduced by him, were partakers of his guilt, cast out

[1] Chron. xxi. 1. Job i. 6. Eph. vi. 16. 2 Cor. vi. 15. Matt. iv. 5. 1 Thess. ii. 5. 2 Cor. iv. 4. John xii. 31. Matt. xii. 24. Eph. ii. 2. Rev. ix. 11. Heb. ii. 14. Rev. xii. 3, 9.

of heaven, his "original abode," placed in a state of degradation and punishment, and reserved to deeper shame and fiercer pains "at the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Through his malignity and falsehood, man, who was innocent, became guilty; man, who was holy, became depraved; man, who was happy, became miserable; man, who was immortal, became liable to death.

Over the minds of the human race, while they continue irregenerate, he exercises a very powerful, though not physically irresistible influence, "working in the children of disobedience, and leading them captive at his will;" and even over their bodies, he has in many instances exercised a malignant power. He exerts himself, by his numerous agents, infernal and human, in counteracting the Divine benignant plan for the salvation of men. Error, sin, and misery, in all their forms, are, ultimately, his work; his animating principle is hatred of God, and his leading object the maintenance and extension of the power of evil.

During that period of holy light and happiness, the millennium, to which the church and the world have so long looked forward with eager desire, his power and opportunities to do evil will be greatly diminished, if not entirely taken away. In the period immediately preceding the general judgment, he will again manifest his unchanged hostility to the benignant designs of God respecting man; and when the mystery of God is finished, will, along with those angels and men who have chosen him for their leader in preference to God, be cut off forever from all intercourse with the unfallen and restored part of the intelligent creation, and "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power."

CHAP. II.—WHAT IS HE?

§ 2.—*He is an adversary—their adversary.*

Let us now inquire, in the second place, what is said of this extraordinary being in the passage before us. He is the Christian's adversary; "your adversary the devil." He is "the adversary;" the friend of none, the enemy of all. Enmity, malignity, is the very element of his moral being. He hates God, and men, and holy angels; and the only tie apparently existing between him and his subordinate agents, is a common enmity against God, and all that is God's. He is the adversary of all men. He has deeply injured the race; and he does not pity, but hate, those whom he has injured. Murderer, manslayer, is his name from the beginning.[1]

But he is peculiarly the adversary of that portion of mankind, who have been led by the good Spirit to revolt from his usurped dominion, to place themselves under the guidance of the Captain of the Lord's host, and to become fellow-workers under him in the accomplishment of his great enterprise, which is "to destroy the works of the devil." Both as individuals and as a body, true Christians are the objects of the peculiar enmity of the evil one. This is the truth which is taught us in the Apocalypse, when we are told, that "the

[1] John viii. 44. Ἀνθρωποκτόνος.

dragon persecuted the woman who was clothed with the sun, and had the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; being wroth with her, and making war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." "They were," as Archbishop Leighton says, "once under his power; and now, being escaped from him, he pursues them, as Pharaoh with all his forces, as a prey that was once in his den, and under his paw; and now that it is rescued, he rages and roars after it." His object is the destruction of the christian cause; the cause of truth and holiness, of God's glory and man's happiness; and therefore he cannot but be the adversary of those who seek to promote that cause. He exerts himself, by craft or violence, to induce them to abandon that cause, by doing which their sharing his destruction would be secured; or, if he cannot succeed in this object, he endeavors to make as miserable as he can in this world, those whom he knows he will have no opportunity of tormenting in the next.

Of the manner in which their adversary manifests his enmity to them, we have a very picturesque account in these words, "As a roaring lion, he walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Under the influence of inflamed malignity, which will not let him rest, compared to the lion's appetite for blood, sharpened by hunger, he, in the exercise of his power and craft, both of which are indicated by the figure, the lion being at once strong and wily, is constantly endeavoring to do them mischief. It is highly probable that the apostle had immediately in his eye the attempts which the wicked one was then making, by means of his agents, both infernal and human, to produce those fearful persecutions on the part of the Roman pagan empire, by which the faith and patience of the saints were so severely tried, by which multitudes were induced to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; turning back to perdition, becoming his prey, body and soul, forever. And multitudes more, who were faithful to the death, and obtained a crown of life, were, "by the devil, cast into prison, and suffered tribulation:" "they had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings: they were stoned, they were slain by the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth." While I have little doubt that this is the immediate reference of the words, they bring before the mind certain general truths respecting our great spiritual enemy, of which it is of great importance that Christians, in all countries and ages, should be habitually mindful. They lead us to think of him as subtle, active, cruel, and powerful.

§ 2.—*He is a subtle adversary.*

This passage leads us to think of our great adversary as subtle. The lion, like all other beasts of prey, is endowed with a high degree of sagacity, to enable it to discover and surprise its prey. When David would convey to our minds an idea of the cunning of his enemies, he compares them to the lion. "He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the inno-

cent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones." [1] The figure naturally thus suggests the idea of subtlety. This is one of the leading thoughts, too, suggested, when the devil is represented as the old serpent: for "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."

Subtlety is one of the most striking characters of our great spiritual enemy. He originally belonged to that order of beings whose wisdom is proverbial—"wise as an angel of God;" and, when he lost his moral purity, we have no reason to think he lost his intellectual energy. It took a new direction, but with unabated force. From the change of its object, it ceased indeed to deserve the name of wisdom. The appropriate appellation henceforward was craft or subtlety. We have a melancholy proof of his cunning, in the method he followed in his successful attempt to deceive the mother of mankind. With what consummate address does he whet her curiosity, quiet her fears, and flatter her vanity, till he has accomplished his great purpose, the ruin of our race! Ever since he obtained that victory over our first parents, he has been engaged in tempting their children; and the experience of nearly six thousand years, added to his natural cunning, must have rendered him expert indeed in the art of deceiving, that he may destroy. Accordingly, we find the apostle terming those suggestions, by which he endeavors to lead men astray from God, "the wiles, the devices of the devil."[2]

He has no power indeed of obtaining directly a knowledge of the human heart. That is the peculiar prerogative of Him who made it. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." [3] But he carefully observes our conduct, and shrewdly draws conclusions respecting our prevailing dispositions. His temptations are regulated by the information he thus obtains. He suits the snare to the habits of the bird he means to entrap. He draws the voluptuary into the way of iniquity by the lure of pleasure, the avaricious by the promise of gain, the ambitious by the prospect of glory. He goes round about his victims, that he may espy where is the quarter in which they are weakest, or least afraid of attack, that he may assault them there. He takes advantage of everything in their temper, age, and condition, to give effect to his suggestions.

He keeps himself as much as possible out of view, and manages his approaches so as, that when danger is at length apprehended, there is scarce a possibility of escape. He even occasionally transforms himself into an angel of light, and employs as his instruments, often while they themselves are unaware of it, the very persons from whom we would have been the last to suspect any hazard.

Sometimes he gets possession of the citadel of the heart as it were by storm, without allowing opportunity or time for repelling the assault. At other times he proceeds by sap and mine; and, without alarm to the conscience, effects his nefarious purpose. But it were endless to enumerate all the subtle devices by which Satan endeavors

[1] Psal. x. 8–10. [2] Rev. xii. 9. Gen. iii. 1. Eph. vi. 11. [3] Jer. xvii. 10.

to disturb the peace and retard the progress of the saint; to prevent the repentance, and to secure the destruction of the sinner. Enough has been said to show, that the figure chosen by the sacred writer is in this respect a significant one; and that the lion, in his arts for securing his prey, is a truly, but an imperfectly, descriptive emblem of "him who beguileth Eve through his subtlety", and has deluded, and is deluding, so many millions of her sons into those ways of error and sin which lead down to the chambers of eternal death.

§ 3.—*He is an active adversary.*

But our great sipritual enemy is not only subtle, he is also active. The lion ranges far and near in quest of his prey. The lion of hell is here represented as walking about, seeking whom he may devour. "Whence comest thou?" said Jehovah to Satan, when he, as the accuser of the brethren, appeared in the midst of the sons of God. "Whence comest thou?" The answer was, "From going to and fro through the earth, and from walking up and down in it."[1] The malignant exertions of the wicked one seem to be unintermitted. Langour and fatigue appear to be feelings to which he is a stranger. In the book of Revelation, he is represented as "accusing the brethren before God, day and night."[2] He is probably the more assiduous in his labors of malignity, as he knows that the period for his active exertions is limited. We cannot doubt that he is aware of the doom that awaits him; that, after a fixed term of ages, he is to be cast into the lake of fire, in the abyss of woe, and kept there under chains, which no created power can, which the uncreated power will not, unloose for ever. He has nothing approaching to satisfaction but in propagating sin and misery; and he knows that this is to come to a close. "The devil is come down among men, having great wrath, knowing that his time is short," or limited.

In realizing to our minds the activity of our great spiritual foe, we are not to think of him merely as an individual. No doubt he is a very active being; but this is not all. He is the chief and prince of unnumbered depraved spirits, who own his authority, prosecute his designs, and obey his commands. Their name is legion; for there are many of them. This gives him a species of ubiquity, and enables him to do what no individual created power and activity could accomplish.

His operations are often really continued when they seem to be intermitted. The mode of conducting them is changed, but the work is not abandoned; and, if he does suspend them for a season, it is but that he may recommence them with a greater probability of success. This remark holds both with respect to those who are yet his willing slaves, and to those who have escaped from under his thrall. "When the unclean spirit goeth out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, but finding none. Then he saith, I will return again to my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds this empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself,

[1] Job i. 7. [2] Rev. xii. 10.

and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." [1] We have an instance of his returning to renew his attack with redoubled violence on those over whom he has no power, in the case of our Lord. We read, after the temptation of forty days in the wilderness, that "the devil departed from him;" but it was only in that form, and but "for a season."[2] He was still going about him, seeking an occasion to make attack on him; and we find him in the hour of exhaustion and sorrow springing on his victim, and by his infernal assault drawing forth from the lips of him who was embodied patience and fortitude, those awful words, as if all he had experienced of diabolical attacks hitherto were unworthy of notice, "Now is the hour and power of darkness."

§. 4.—*He is a cruel adversary.*

Cruelty is another feature in the character of our great spiritual enemy, which the statement in the text brings before the mind. The lion is a stranger to pity. Like most ravenous beasts, he seems to have satisfaction in inflicting pain. The bleating of the lamb whom he is about to devour awakens in him no relentings, and he regards not the agonies he occasions to the bleeding, mangled sufferer. Equally ruthless is the great murderer from the beginning, the great destroyer of human souls. He appears to have a savage satisfaction in producing misery. The lion, when he tears to pieces the quivering limbs of the slaughtered kid, has an enjoyment altogether separate from the gratification of the desire to destroy. He satisfies the painful cravings of hunger, and obtains nourishment for his body. But the destroyer of human innocence and peace, the devourer of souls, derives no advantage, can derive no advantage, knows that he can derive no advantage, from the miseries which he inflicts, the ruin which he occasions. On the contrary, every malignant act deepens his guilt, and will aggravate his future condemnation; and he cannot but be aware of this. Yet so deeply is the desire of diffusing misery rooted in his nature, that though conscious that in yielding to it, he is but rendering his miserable condition more miserable, "treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," he still, day and night, restlessly seeks for opportunities of making the good bad, and the bad worse, the happy miserable, and the miserable more miserable.

§ 5.—*He is a powerful adversary.*

The only other idea suggested by the figurative description of our great spiritual enemy is, that he is a being of formidable power. Solomon informs us that the "lion is the strongest among beasts," [3] and, I believe modern naturalists hold that there is no animal of the same size which possesses so much muscular power. The devil belongs to an order, the angelic, which excels in strength; and though we know his powers are restrained by the Divine providence, we have no reason to think that his moral depravation produced any

[1] Matt. xii. 43. [2] Luke iv. 13. [3] Prov. xxx. 30.

diminution of his physical energy. The tempest which overwhelmed the family of Job in the ruins of the house of their elder brother, and the fearful effects produced both on the bodies and the minds of those individuals who were the subjects of demoniac possession, prove both what he can do, and would do, if not restrained by a superior power. To what extent he can and does employ physical agents, what are commonly termed the powers of nature, in executing his malignant designs, we cannot tell. This we know, that the Scripture representations naturally lead us to think of Satan as not weak, but powerful. He is emblematized in the parable by "the strong man;" and the apostle obviously estimates those unseen opponents, of whom the devil is the leader, as far more formidable foes than of the most powerful human enemies.

We need, according to him, *divine* strength and heavenly armor to resist such enemies. "Be strong," says he, "in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil: for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." [1] So much for illustration of the apostle's statement respecting the Christian's great spiritual enemy, so subtle, so active, so cruel, so powerful.

That part of our subject which we have attempted to illustrate, is replete with important practical instruction.

What a striking view does the contrast of the original and the present character and employment of the devil, give us of the malignant nature and tremendous power of moral evil! He who is now the worst and the most miserable of created beings, was once one of the best and the happiest. He who now prowls about the universe, "a fugitive and a vagabond," restless and miserable everywhere, had his first abode in the region of perfect purity, near to the throne of the Eternal; and, instead of as now going about seeking how he can waste and destroy the best part of God's works, his constant employment and delight was to celebrate the praises and do the commandments of Jehovah, hearkening to the voice of his word. And what has effected the fearful change? What has converted the angel into the devil? It was sin; that only evil in God's universe in which there is no good; that evil, the depths of whose malignity no created mind can sound. Man in his fallen state compared with man in his primeval state, earth in its present state compared with paradise, strikingly show that it is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from God; but still more striking is the illustration we have of this most important truth, when we contrast the accursed fiend with the holy angel, and the bottomless pit and the fiery lake with the palace of the great king, the Lord of Hosts, and the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand for evermore.

How disgraceful and miserable must be the condition of those who are the slaves of this subtile, active, cruel, powerful, depraved intelligence, in turns the instruments of his detestable designs and the victims of his insatiable cruelty! And this is the situation of all uncon-

[1] Matt. xii. 29. Eph. vi. 11–13.

verted men, whether they are aware of it or not. They are of their father the devil; and his lusts—the things he desires and delights in—they willingly abuse their powers and degrade their nature in doing. They are "taken captive by him at his will."[1] He is their successful tempter now. He will be, if mercy prevent not, their unrelenting tormentor forever. Oh, that they were aware of the horrors of their situation, that they saw its debasement, that they felt its wretchedness, that they realized its dangers!

How grateful should we be to HIM who came to destroy the works of the wicked one, and to deliver men from his usurped dominion and baleful power! The house of the strong man has been entered by one stronger than he. The prey has been taken from the mighty, and the captive of the terrible one delivered. The greatness of the blessing, apart from the manner in which it was procured, calls for lively gratitude; but the claims of our deliverer are felt to be tenfold strong, when we recollect that He, the only begotten, the Holy One, of God, submitted to be tempted of the devil, to have the moral sensibilities of his holy nature shocked and tortured by his loathsome suggestions, that we might be delivered from his power, and be taught, by the example of "the Captain of our salvation," how to conduct the conflict with the enemy, so as to become more than conquerors through him who loved us. Blessed, ever blessed, be he who came in the name of the Lord to bruise the head of the old serpent; and who, through the merit of his atonement and the power of his Spirit, enables the most feeble and timid of his people to "tread on the lion and the adder," and to "trample the young lion and the dragon under foot."

Let Christians rejoice that, if a subtle, cruel, active, and powerful enemy is continually prowling about, the eye of infinite wisdom and love rests ever on them, the arm of never-tiring omnipotence is ever around them to protect and defend them. The lion of hell is a chained lion, a muzzled lion, to Christians. He may alarm, but he shall never devour them. His chain is in the hand of his conqueror and their Lord.

It was very natural for Peter to put his brethren in mind of their great enemy. He must have often thought of the words of our Lord Jesus, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."[2] His experience is full of warning and encouragement. It proves that if Christians are not cautious, though the lion of hell shall not be permitted to devour them, he may inflict wounds of which they will bear the marks till the close of life; and it finely illustrates our Lord's declaration,—"I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Neither their own heedlessness, nor the malignity of their infernal foe, shall be able to accomplish their destruction. Let him, then, that is born of God, "keep himself, that the wicked one touch him not;" and let his joy, that he has a better keeper than himself, even the keeper of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps, not produce security, but encourage vigilance. God keeps his people, not without but through their own watchfulness.

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 26. [2] Luke xxii. 31.

Finally, let all of us who have reason to hope that we have been emancipated from the powers of the wicked one, in our humble station co-operate with our great Deliverer in rescuing our fellow-men from the degrading bondage, from the destroying power, of his and our great enemy; and while the children of the devil are so clearly proving themselves to be so, by imitating him in going about seeking whom they may destroy, let us prove our connection with him whom we claim as our Lord and Master, by going about doing good, endeavoring to pluck the brand from the burning, to pull the prey of the lion of hell from his devouring jaws, to seek and to save what is in extreme hazard, through the craft and activity, the power and cruelty, of the wicked one, of being lost, lost forever.

II.—THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN REFERENCE TO HIS GREAT ENEMY.

Let us now consider the apostle's account of the Christian's duty in reference to his great spiritual adversary. His duty is to resist him; and, in order effectually to resist him, to be sober, to be watchful, to be steadfast in the faith.

CHAP. I.—WHAT HE MUST DO TO HIS GREAT ENEMY—RESIST HIM.

The attacks of our great spiritual enemy naturally divide themselves into two classes; those which are made on the Christian as an individual, and those which are made on the christian cause. It is the duty of the Christian to resist both.

§ 1.—*He must resist his attacks on himself.*

Temptation to sin is the manner in which the evil one attacks the individual Christian. Sometimes these tempations are direct; oftener they are indirect; but all temptation to sin, like all sin itself, may be considered as directly or indirectly the work of the devil. It is much more a matter of curiosity than of use, to seek to distinguish accurately the temptations which come immediately from the wicked one, from those in presenting which to the mind he employs intermediate agencies. But it is of great importance to remember, that all solicitations to sin, from whatever quarter they come, are in accordance with his will, and, if not resisted, will contribute to the gaining of his object in warring against the soul. Of all suggestions of this kind, we may say both that they come not, they cannot come, from above; they do, they must, come from beneath. Of some of them we may say they are "earthly," of others they are "sensual," of all they are "devilish."

Generally speaking, it is the duty of the Christian carefully to keep out of the way of temptation, to avoid everything, which can be avoided in consistency with duty, which may afford an opportunity to the great enemy or his agents to assail him with solicitations to sin. It is madness to hold parley with him, or uncalled on to provoke him to combat. Such unnecessary tamperings, such self-confident conflicts, generally end in sin and shame.

But the adversary will not let the Christian alone, and the path of duty is a path that sometimes, indeed ofttimes, leads into temptation. When the Christian is attacked, he must not flee, he must not yield himself up into the hands of his enemy; he must resist, he must oppose him. He must not comply with his solicitations. Like that good spiritual soldier of ancient times he must say, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" or, like the Captain of salvation, he must, with the shield of faith, quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, repelling his reiterated suggestions by "It is written, it is written," and in holy indignation bidding him "get behind him."[1] He must not allow himself to deliberate on a proposal which involves in it the denial of truth, the neglect of duty, or the commission of sin, by whatever plausibilities and apparent advantages it may be recommended, but immediately, and with abhorrence, reject it.

Non-compliance with the suggestions of the wicked one, is, however, but a part of the christian duty of resistance. The Christian must oppose the wicked one. He must not merely stand on the defensive; he must attack the enemy, he must quit himself like a man, and so fight as to turn to flight the alien and his armies. He must so resist the devil as that he shall flee from him. In plain words, he must make solicitations to sin occasions and means of progress in holiness. For example, when tempted to fretfulness under affliction, instead of yielding to the temptation, he must "glorify God in the fires," by more than ever possessing his soul in patience, and counting it all joy to be brought into manifold tribulation. When tempted to be ashamed of Christ or his cause, he must seize that opportunity of making his conduct proclaim more loudly than ever, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When tempted to penuriousness in supporting the cause of Christ, he must give more cheerfully, and, if possible, more plenteously, than ever. When tempted to be weary in well-doing, he must feel this as a powerful reason why he should be "steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." When tempted to associate with the worldly and ungodly, he should take an opportunity of showing that in the saints on the earth, the excellent ones, is all his delight. When tempted to draw very near the borders of criminal indulgence, let him not even stand still where he is, but retire still farther from the appearance of evil, and carefully keep off "the debatable land." When the evil one tempts to unfrequency or carelessness in sacred prayer, let it be felt as a reason why he should seek to realize more and more in his own experience, what it is to "pray in the spirit, to pray always, with all prayer and supplication, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance." Let temptations to carelessness produce increased vigilance, and to indolence increased diligence. Let attempts to make us neglect the assembling of ourselves together, lead to more conscientious attendance on public religious services, and more undivided attention in them. In one word, let all his endeavors to lead us in the way of sin, end in our farther advancement in the opposite way of holiness. This is the way to turn the artillery of the wicked one against himself. Nothing is so well fitted to mor-

[1] Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10.

tify that old adversary, as to find that the very means he employs to produce our apostasy and ruin are converted into the occasion of our establishment in the faith, our advancement in holiness, and our fitness for heaven. So much for the resistance which the Christian is to make to the attacks of his great spiritual enemy, directed immediately against himself as an individual.

§ 2.—*He must resist his attacks on the christian cause.*

But the Christian is to resist not only these attacks, he is to resist also the attacks which his adversary the devil is constantly making on the cause of Christ. He is constantly engaged in endeavoring to corrupt the truth as it is in Jesus; to introduce, and maintain, and extend error, and superstition, and fanaticism, and schism, and bigotry, and disorder, and impurity, in the churches of Christ, and to oppose the exertions which are making to diffuse the knowledge and the influence of "the truth and grace, which came by Jesus Christ." The Christian is to fight against Satan, not only in his own heart, but in the church and the world. There is a battle-field without as well as within. He is carefully to avoid everything which may in any way prove, however unintentionally, co-operation with the lawless one in his nefarious designs; and by all proper methods he must endeavor to counteract him.

He must, however, take care not to attempt what has been too frequently attempted, to vanquish the wicked one by weapons borrowed from his own armory. He must not repel force by force, false argument by false argument, railing by railing. In such conflict the devil is sure to overcome; indeed, the very employment of these weapons is a proof that he has already, to a certain degree, overcome. In this warfare, Christians must remember that "the weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down strongholds, and bringing into captivity every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." Their motto must be, "Not by might and power, but by God's Spirit. By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and the left." This is the manner in which the apostle teaches us to carry on our warfare for the cause of Christ against the cause of the devil. "The servant of God must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may deliver themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive of him at his will."[1]

Christians are not to stand looking idly on when the wicked one, by ignorance and error, and superstition and profligacy, is consummating the eternal perdition of men by millions. No, they are to "rise up for God against the evil-doer, they are to stand up for Him against" his armies, "the workers of iniquity." As "the armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,"[2] they are to follow on

[1] 2 Cor. x. 4. Zech. iv. 6. 2 Cor. vi. 6–8. 2 Tim. ii. 24–26. [2] Rev. xix. 11–14.

their white horses him whose name is the Word of God, faithful and true, who, clothed in a vesture dipt in blood, rides forth prosperously on his white horse, "in righteousness, judging and making war, conquering and to conquer." Like him, wherever they are, according to the facilities afforded by their circumstances, they are to be constantly engaged in destroying the works of the devil. Thus, then, are Christians to resist their adversary the devil.[1]

CHAP. II.—WHAT THE CHRISTIAN IS TO DO, THAT HE MAY RESIST HIS GREAT ENEMY.

The apostle not only enjoins this duty of resistance, he also instructs Christians how they are to be enabled to perform it. If they would successfully resist the devil, either in their own hearts, or in the church and the world, they must "be sober, vigilant, and steadfast in the faith." Let us shortly explain these exercises, and show how necessary they are, and how well fitted they are, to enable the Christian to resist his adversary the devil.

When we read these words, we feel that the injunctions contained in them have already been given; the first of them more than once. The reiteration of such precepts in so short an epistle, teaches a lesson both to ministers and people, both to the teachers and the taught. It says to the first, "for you to say the same things should not be grievous," for the second, "it is safe;" ay, it is necessary. "Precept must be on precept, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." "It were easy," says Archbishop Leighton, "to entertain men's mind with new discourse, if our task were rather to please than to profit; for there be many things which, with little labor, might be brought forth as new and strange to ordinary hearers. But there be a few things which it chiefly concerns us to know and practise, and these are to be more frequently represented and pressed. This apostle, and other divine writers, drew from too full a spring to be ebb of matter; but they rather choose profitable iterations than unprofitable variety, and so should we." Yet we shall find that, though substantially the same exhortations are repeated, it is always with a peculiar adaptation to the connection in which they occur. They are not mere repetitions; they are examples of the applications of general principles, or precepts, to particular cases. It is obviously so in the instance before us.

§ 1.—*He must be sober.*

The word here translated "be sober," is the same which, in the seventh verse of the preceding chapter, is rendered be vigilant. Its proper signification is to be abstinent from, or temperate in the use of, wine or other intoxicating drinks. It designates a state directly the reverse of a state of intoxication. The word may be understood

[1] The motives to resistance are strongly put by Tertullian: "Stat conflictus conspector, et victoriæ Agonothetes, Deus vivus: Xystarches, Spiritus Sanctus: Epistates, Christus Jesus; Corona, æternitatis brabium, angelicæ in cœlis substantiæ politia, gloria in secula seculorum."—Lib. ad Martyr. iii.

either literally or figuratively. If understood literally, we are here taught that temperance, in reference to intoxicating drinks, is necessary in order to our resisting the devil. And, certainly, nothing can be more obviously true than this. The natural tendency of intoxicating drinks is to diminish the power of conscience and reason, and to increase the power of the lower principles of our nature, animal appetite and irascible feeling. It increases the strength of what needs to be restrained, and weakens the strength of what is fitted and intended to restrain. It delivers the man, in one point of view, bound hand and foot, so far as resistance is concerned, into the devil's hands; and, in another, presents him a willing soldier, appropriately armed for his service. An intoxicated man would be ill fitted to take care of himself, if exposed to the attacks of subtle, powerful beasts of prey; and he is certainly not better fitted to guard himself against that crafty and active, strong and cruel spiritual enemy, who is here represented as prowling about like a roaring lion. While this is undoubtedly true, and, highly important, as the corresponding term "be vigilant," that is, wakeful, is plainly to be understood in a figurative sense, we apprehend the expression before us must also be interpreted figuratively; an interpretation which essentially includes the literal meaning, while it includes much more.

"Things seen and temporal," the pleasures, the riches, the honors of this world, are apt to intoxicate the mind. Men under their supreme influence are regulated more by imagination and appetite than by conscience and reason. What is present and sensible, occupies the whole mind. What is unseen and future, is overlooked and forgotten, and treated as if it had no existence. Time is everything, eternity is nothing. This is mental intoxication; and sobriety, in opposition to this, is just the sound estimate which enlightened conscience and reason form of the comparative value of things seen and unseen, things temporal and eternal, with a habitual state of feeling and action corresponding to this estimate.

He is sober who reckons that the ever-enduring holy happiness which can be found only in possessing the favor, and being conformed to the image of God, is of more true value to man than all else which the created universe contains; that the certainty of attaining the greatest earthly good is too dearly purchased by the slightest hazard of losing this happiness; that no sacrifice, no suffering, is to be much counted on if necessary in order to its attainment; and that what has no tendency to secure this, cannot be a matter of very much importance to a being like man. Such a man shows a mind free from intoxication. He judges of things as they really are. His maxims are obviously the words of truth and soberness. God is more excellent than the creature. The soul is more valuable than the body. Heaven is better than earth, far better than hell. Time is shorter than eternity.

The man who is thus sober is prepared for resisting the devil, in both the ways illustrated above. The devil is the god of this world, and all his power is derived from it. The sum of what he has to say in the way of temptation is, 'All earthly good is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. All earthly evil is in my power, and on whomsoever I will I inflict it.' It is by the hope of worldly good,

or the fear of worldly evil, that he prevails on men to neglect duty, and to commit sin. But the truly sober man has his spiritual senses too well exercised to believe either the implied or the express falsehood. He knows that God has not relinquished the government of the world, or so committed it into the hands of his great enemy, as that he has the disposal either of the good or the evil of life; and though it were otherwise, he knows that there is a more valuable good which compliance with his suggestions would forfeit; a more dreadful evil to which compliance with his suggestions would expose him. So far as he is influenced by this sober judgment, he "keeps himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not." And the same sober judgments of the value of the soul, and of the importance of eternity, naturally lead to strenuous, persevering exertions to resist the devil, in his attempts to introduce error and superstition into the church, and to perpetuate ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness in the world.

§ 2.—*He must be vigilant.*

But that Christians may effectually resist their adversary the devil, the apostle calls on them to be not only sober, but "vigilant." The literal meaning of the word is in opposition to falling asleep, to keep awake as shepherds do when watching their sheep by night, or sentinels when keeping watch on the walls of a city; it indicates a state of watchfulness, in opposition to a state of sleep or drowsiness. Some would interpret the words literally; and it is on this ground, among others, that Roman Catholics prescribe watching as well as fasting as a means of spiritual advantage, and of successfully resisting our ghostly adversaries.

There can be no reasonable doubt, however, that here, and wherever else in the New Testament, watching is prescribed as a general christian duty, the word is used figuratively. A state of security, inattention, and inactivity, is naturally emblematized by a state of sleep; and a state of consciousness of existing hazards, attention to them, and active employment of the means to escape them, by a state of watching or wakefulness.

To be watchful, with a reference to the resistance of the evil one, implies that the individual is aware of the existence and reality of the hazards to which, from malignant spiritual influence, his highest interests are exposed; that he is on the alert to notice all the movements of the subtle, active, cruel, and powerful foe; and that not ignorant of, or inattentive to, his devices, he looks around him, walks circumspectly, aware that in any quarter the enemy may make his appearance; and that he so disguises himself, and varies his form, that it requires spiritual sagacity, in its most awakened state, to detect him; and, finally, that when he does discover him ready to deceive or to devour, to delude or destroy, he is ready, broad awake, in full possession of his spiritual faculties, prepared to employ the proper means for counter-working him, and disappointing his nefarious purposes.

It is not enough that a man be sober, that is, not intoxicated, round whom a powerful crafty beast of prey is prowling. He must be

wakeful. However sober, if he fall asleep, he is in imminent hazard of being dangerously wounded, if not devoured. Indeed, he is not acting like a sober man, if in these circumstances, he allows himself to fall asleep. In like manner, the Christian must not only have a just estimate of the transcendent importance of things unseen and eternal, but his spiritual senses must be habitually exercised; the eyes of his mind "must look right on, and his eyelids look straight before him." He must "ponder the path of his feet," and especially "keep his heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."[1] He must, like a watchful sentinel, take good heed, that through none of the external senses, the gates, as Bunyan represents them, of the good town Mansoul, the great adversary, under any disguise, find his way to the citadel of the heart. He must be watchful, for his enemy is so.

The influence which this vigilance is calculated to exert on the resistance of the wicked one in his attack both on us as individuals, and on the cause of Christ, is so obvious, that I may safely leave you to follow out this train of thought in your private meditations.

§ 3.—*He must be steadfast in the faith.*

The third and principal means by which Christians are to be enabled to resist the great adversary, is the being "steadfast in the faith." We call that the principal means; for it is as necessary to the right use of the other means as to the gaining of the common end: as necessary to the being "sober and vigilant" as to "the resisting of the devil."

The apostle takes for granted that the persons whom he addressed were "believers." They were "in the faith;" and he calls on them to be "steadfast in the faith." Had he been speaking to unconverted men, the first thing he would have called on them to do, would have been to believe; for, till they believed, they could neither see their danger, nor use the means which were necessary for their safety. They to whom he writes had believed the truth respecting their natural condition as the willing, helpless slaves of the wicked one, bound in the fetters of guilt and the cords of depravity. They had believed the truth respecting Jesus the great deliverer, who, by the blood of his covenant, had made provision for the deliverance of the prisoners out of the pit in which there was no water; who proclaims liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them who are bound; who takes the prey from the mighty, and delivers the captive of the terrible one. They had believed that those who refuse to be released by him, must, along with their enslaver, be shut up under everlasting chains in the prison of hell, and that they who accept of the freely offered deliverance shall, under the protection and guidance of their redeeming Lord, be preserved, amid all the attempts of their former oppressors to bring them again into slavery, and ultimately placed by him in circumstances of perfect, holy happiness, while Satan shall be forever bruised under their feet.

It is the belief of these things that has sobered their minds, and

[1] Prov. iv. 23, 25, 26.

roused them to spiritual vigilance. This has wakened them, and it is this only that can keep them awake; and for this purpose they must be "steadfast in the faith." They must hold fast the truth as it is in Jesus.

It is not enough that they have believed; they must continue believing. The truth and its evidence must be habitually before their minds. Everything depends on that. They are safe "if they keep in memory what has been preached to them;" not otherwise. The truth works effectually towards the resistance of the wicked one, but only in him who believes it, and only in the degree in which he believes it. It is faith that makes the Christian strong for combat. Let him lose sight of the truth and its evidence, and, like Samson shorn of his locks, he is weak as another man. Whenever he staggers through unbelief, he becomes powerless in resisting the great adversary. It is he only who puts on the whole armor of God that can stand in the evil day; but it is the believer alone who can put on and wear and wield that armor. It is the girdle of truth believed that can alone gird up the loins of the mind. The breastplate, is the righteousness which is of God by faith. The well-roughed shoes, of the preparation of the gospel of peace, which are necessary to enable the spiritual soldier to stand firm in the slippery field of temptation, can be worn only by them who believe that gospel. The shield, which enables him to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, is the shield of faith. The hope, which is the helmet of salvation, can grace no brow but the brow of the believer, for hope rests on faith; the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, can be wielded only by the arm of the believer; and the prayer which is necessary to secure the right and the effectual use of all those pieces of spiritual armor, is the prayer of faith.

Had our first parents been steadfast in faith, they had never fallen. They became the prey of unbelief in the shape of doubt, before they became the victims of the devil. God said, "Ye shall surely die;" they doubted him. The devil said, "Ye shall not surely die;" they believed him: and then were befooled and enslaved by him. It was by being steadfast in faith that the great Captain of our salvation successfully resisted the wicked one, and blunted all his fiery darts. To them all he presented the shield of faith in a specific Divine declaration, and the most envenomed of them fell harmless at his feet. By faith all the elders who have received a good report turned to flight the alien armies of their infernal as well as mortal enemies; and still is it true, and it will continue true till the last spiritual conflict has taken place on earth, "This is the victory that overcometh the world," and the God of the world, "even our faith."[1] Here, as in the former case, I leave it to yourselves to follow out more fully the manner in which steadfast faith operates in enabling Christians to resist the adversary in his attacks on themselves individually, and on the great cause of their Lord and King.

[1] 1 John v. 4.

III.—THE CHRISTIAN'S ENCOURAGEMENT TO PERFORM HIS DUTY IN REFERENCE TO HIS GREAT ENEMY.

It only remains that we briefly attend to the encouragement which the Christian has amid the sufferings in which his struggles with his spiritual enemies may involve him. That encouragement is derived from two sources—an undoubted fact and a faithful promise; an undoubted fact—the same struggle has been sustained and surmounted by all the brotherhood: and a faithful promise—"the God of all grace, who hath called them unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after they have suffered a while, will make them perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle them." Let us attend to these encouragements in their order.

CHAP. I.—THE ENCOURAGING FACT—ALL THE BROTHERHOOD HAVE SUSTAINED AND SURMOUNTED THIS STRUGGLE.

And first, let us consider the encouraging fact. "Knowing this," says the apostle, "that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world." It has been questioned whether the sufferings here spoken of refer to the inward sufferings occasioned by the temptations of the wicked one, or to the outward sufferings, the persecutions which spring out of the influence of the wicked one on the minds of his slaves and their enemies. I do not think that it is necessary, or even proper, to confine it to either. It refers to sufferings growing out of the machinations and agency of their great spiritual adversary of whatever kind. The apostle states that "the same afflictions"—afflictions of the same kind arising from the same cause—"were accomplished in their brethren," literally, 'in their brotherhood,' "in the world."

Some have thought that these words contain in them but little to support under suffering, and have applied the words of a heathen moralist: "It is but poor consolation that I am one of many sufferers." But if we look at the words carefully, we shall find that they are replete with encouragement.

Sufferers are apt to think their case quite singular; others have been tried, but none tried as they are; and the Apostle Paul shows his knowledge of human nature when he says to the Corinthians, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Your sufferings are not peculiar. It is unreasonable to complain of what is so common a lot. It were pusillanimous to sink under what so many are suffering and have sustained.

But the consolation here given is of a higher kind than this. These sufferings are characteristic of the brotherhood to which you belong. Every member of that brotherhood is a partaker of them. He who is the first-born of the many brethren experienced the temptations of the devil and the persecutions of wicked men; and in their sufferings all the younger branches of the holy family have fellowship with Him. You could not belong to that brotherhood if you were entire strangers to their afflictions.[1] "If ye were of the world

[1] "Erras si putas, unquam Christianum persecutionem non pati."—HIERONYMUS.

the world would love its own," and the god of this world would not so attack you; "but because ye are not of the world, but chosen out of the world," therefore the world and its prince harass and abuse you. It is one of the family badges; "if ye were without such chastisements," of which all the children, all the brotherhood, are partakers, "then were ye bastards, and not sons."[1] Would you willingly part with the characteristic privileges of the brotherhood, in order to obtain exemption from their characteristic sufferings? Besides, as these sufferings are common to the brotherhood, you may be assured of that cordial sympathy which lightens suffering, and that "fervent prayer which avails much."

Then there is some peculiarity in the phrase "are accomplished," are fulfilled. It is not said they are endured by, but they are accomplished or fulfilled in. This peculiar mode of expression leads us to think of these sufferings as appointments which must be fulfilled. No chance has happened to you. "This hath come forth from him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Satan and his agents are but doing to you, as they did to your Lord, "what God's hand and counsel before time determined to be done." These temptations and persecutions are a part of the manifold trials to which, for a season, it is needful that you be subject; for "they who would live godly in this world must suffer persecution." Your Lord has assured you, that "in the world ye shall have tribulation;" and his apostle, that "through much tribulation ye must enter the kingdom." These are sufferings to which ye are appointed and called. These are sufferings appointed to every Christian as a member of the body of Christ, and they must be accomplished. They are a part of the discipline by which the brotherhood on earth are to be made fit for joining the brotherhood in heaven.[2]

And, then, what encouragement and consolation is there in the thought, that these afflictions, as they must for wise and benignant reasons be endured by the whole brotherhood while they are in the world, are to be *accomplished* here? The brotherhood, who are with their Father and their elder Brother in Heaven, are completely beyond the reach of temptation and persecution. Satan is bruised under their feet. They are made more than conquerors. The helmet has been exchanged for the crown that fadeth not away; the sword of conflict for the palm of victory; and the cry, "I am oppressed, undertake for me," for the shout, "Salvation to our God and the Lamb forever and ever. To him that loved us and washed us in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God his Father, to him be dominion and glory forever and ever."

And where they are, their brethren on the earth will ere long be. Is it not meet that we should endure with patience and fortitude on earth, since such rest and enjoyment are prepared for us in heaven? The phrase, brotherhood on earth, naturally leads the mind to the brotherhood in heaven. There is to be the permanent abode of the *whole* brotherhood. "The gathering together" at the coming of the Lord, is to be there. "Faithful is he who promised, who also will do

[1] John xv. 19. Heb. xii. 8.
[2] Isa. xxviii. 29. Acts v. 28; xiv. 22. John xvi. 33.

it:" "In my Father's house are many mansions," accommodation for all the brotherhood; "if it had not been so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go away, I will come again, and take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also."[1] He became perfect through the accomplishment of his sufferings; and so, in a sense suited to our case, must we become perfect through the accomplishment of our sufferings. At the very utmost, we are not to be long in the world where our afflictions are to be accomplished, finished; we are to be forever in the better world, where the glorious results which infinite wisdom and kindness have wrought out by these afflictions, will continue unfolding themselves to our growing astonishment and delight throughout eternity.

Thus are all these afflictions accomplished *here*. The brotherhood who have passed the Jordan of death, and entered into the heavenly Canaan, are forever secure from the attacks of the wild beasts that roam the desert through which we are passing, and from all the afflictions which flow from these attacks. The old serpent shall never find his way into the restored paradise; and thither all the brotherhood are tending. Yet a little while and they shall all be there, safe and happy together, in their Father's house forever. This is surely great encouragement, abundant consolation.

CHAP. II.—THE FAITHFUL PROMISE.

Let us now turn our attention to the still more explicit encouragement suggested by the faithful promise contained in the tenth verse; for, on careful inspection, it will be found to be a promise. The tenth verse is very generally considered as a prayer on the part of the apostle, that Christians might, amid their struggles and sufferings, be "made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled." There can be no doubt that was his wish and prayer for them: but a closer consideration of the words convinces me, that this verse is not a prayer but a promise—not a request that God would confer certain most valuable and appropriate blessings on tempted, struggling, afflicted Christians, but a declaration that he will bestow them.

I think most careful readers of the Bible must have felt disappointed, that after so very graphic a view had been given of the dangers and struggles of the Christian, all that should have been said for his encouragement and comfort is, "the same afflictions are fulfilled in your brethren that are in the world." The rendering given by our translators of the tenth verse, is not literal—indeed from the text from which they translated, no strictly literal intelligible version could have been given. By the slightest of all changes, the putting one vowel in the place of another,[2] a change which the inquiries of critics have found not only to be authorized but required, the original passage is freed from all difficulty, and the encouragement administered to the tempted, struggling, afflicted believer, is as abundant and complete as we could expect or desire; indeed, "above all that we could ask or think." Literally rendered, the words thus amended, are, "but the

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 1. John xiv. 2.

[2] ε instead of α.

God of all grace, who hath called *us*," or "*you*, unto his eternal glory[1] by or in Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, shall make you perfect, strengthen, stablish, settle you." It is as if he had said, such afflictions rising out of the attacks of the wicked one, must be endured by you; for they are the result of Divine appointment, an appointment reaching to and fulfilled in all your brotherhood in the world; but be not discouraged: "The God of all grace, who has called you unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, shall make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The Christian, watching against the wiles, struggling against the assaults of the lion of hell, and suffering under the effects of his attacks, and their resistance, has need of abundant support, and encouragement, and consolation, and assuredly he has got it here.

There is strong consolation *in the promise itself*. "God shall make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," notwithstanding, nay, by means of these very afflictions. And then, what superadded encouragement and comfort is there *in the adjuncts of the promise*, in the manner in which the promise is given. For who promises? "The God of all grace." "The God who has called you." "The God who has called you unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus." "The God who has called you to this glory after ye have suffered awhile." Is there not in every one of these considerations a new and most exuberant fountain of spiritual encouragement and joy opened to the christian warrior, from which he may draw most refreshing draughts when fatigued by his conflicts with his great adversary, "faint yet pursuing?" Well may he, like the Captain of his salvation, drink of the brook in the way, and lift up the head for renewed conflict, or untiring pursuit. Let us first, then, look at the matter of the promise, and then at the manner in which it is given.

§ 1.—*The encouragement contained in the promise itself.*

Let us look at the promise, "God shall make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The general meaning of the promise obviously is, God shall, notwithstanding, and even by means of these afflictions, promote your spiritual improvement, and add to your real happiness. All the figurative expressions are well fitted, and, with the exception of one of them,[2] frequently employed in the New Testament, to denote spiritual improvement and growth in holiness and comfort; and it has been supposed by many interpreters, that it is to no purpose to look for any specific meaning in each of these terms. They consider the promise as just a declaration, that through the preaching of God's word, the influence of his Spirit, and the overruling power of his providence, these afflictions should work together for their good, in the most extensive sense of the word, for making them really and, in the end, completely holy and happy, in entire conformity to the holy, holy, holy, ever-blessed One. We are disposed to think, however, that the apostle seldom heaps up words merely for the sake of emphasis, and that, in the passage before us, every one of the figurative expressions presents us with a distinct phase, as it

[1] Ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. [2] Σθενώσει is one of the ἅπαξ λεγόμενα.

were, of the blessings which God bestows on his people, under the afflictions, and by means of the afflictions, which are connected with the assaults of the great adversary on them, and their resistance to these assaults.

It has been ingeniously supposed, that there is but one image in the whole passage, and that the different figurative expressions are connected representations of its different parts. Christians are supposed here, as in many places in the New Testament, to be represented as "God's building," "a holy temple,"[1] and the whole of their christian improvement is termed their "edification," or building up. They are "settled," or the foundation is laid; then they are "strengthened," strong beams are fixed, and massy pillars raised; then they are "stablished," the building is roofed and protected from the injuries of the weather; and, finally, they are "perfected." Everything within and without is so fashioned, as to become a meet habitation for God through the Spirit. There is ingenuity enough here; but it is plain, if that had been the apostle's figure, the order of the expression would have been reversed. The four expressions seem, plainly, to bring four distinct and unconnected figurative representations before the mind. Let us endeavor to ascertain their precise meaning.

(1.) *They shall be made perfect.*

God promises, first, that he will "make" Christians struggling with their great adversary "perfect." The word translated "make perfect," properly signifies to make fully ready, to put in full order, to complete. It is used of fitting nets by mending them for being employed, and of the wickedness of the wicked fitting them as vessels of wrath for being destroyed.[2] This is its meaning, when the apostle prays the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, to make Christians "perfect in every good work to do his will;"[3] that is, to fit them, by supplying what was wanting in them, for doing God's will in the performance of every good work; and when the Messiah, our High Priest, who must have somewhat to offer, is introduced as saying, "a body hast thou prepared (the same word as here) me," made ready for, fitted for me; and when the worlds are said to be "framed (the same word) by the word of God," prepared, fitted, for the purpose they were meant to serve.[4] In the passage before us, viewed as a promise to those who were called to conflict with an adversary, with whom in themselves they were very ill able to cope (and such general words must almost always be modified in their meaning, and limited in their reference by the context), its meaning plainly is, God will, by supplying all your defects, fit you for the conflict to which you are called. He will by his word and Spirit qualify you for all that you shall be called on to do and suffer in the combat. His grace shall be sufficient for you. He does not send you unarmed to the field of combat. He gives you the

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 9. Eph. ii. 21, 22. 1 Pet. ii. 5.
[2] Matt. iv. 21. Rom. ix. 22.
[3] Heb. xiii. 21.
[4] Heb. x. 5; xi. 3.

whole armor of God,[1] "that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." He gives you the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and he not only lays them down before you, but by his Spirit he enables you to put them on, and teaches you so to prove the various parts of this celestial panoply, as that in the day of battle you may turn them to good account in the combat with the alien and his armies. He will give you all the wisdom, all the courage, all the energy, that is necessary for successful conflict. This promise seems addressed to the Christian looking forward to the combat. The succeeding ones seem to refer to him when engaged in it.

(2.) *They shall be established.*

The second promise is, that God will "stablish" them. To stablish is to keep firm and steadfast. The Christian is afraid that he shall fall before his enemies, that he shall not be able to keep his ground, that he shall lose courage, that he shall be turned back, with shame to himself and disgrace to his Lord and his cause, that he shall prove an apostate, that he shall not be able to hold fast the faith and its profession, that he shall find it difficult to stand, far more to withstand, that he shall make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and, instead of being crowned as a victor, shall be put to shame as a recreant and castaway; but God meets these not unnatural apprehensions with the promise—I will stablish thee, I will keep thee from falling. The promise in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, iii. 3, seems quite parallel with this: "The Lord is faithful who shall stablish you, and preserve you from evil," rather from the evil one.[2] It is just the evangelical version of the Old Testament oracle: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; I am thy God: I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." He will "put his law into their hearts;" and then, notwithstanding all the attempts of their spiritual enemies, "they shall not depart from him."[3]

(3.) *They shall be strengthened.*

The third promise is, God will "strengthen" you. In the day of spiritual conflict he will enable them not only to stand, but to withstand; not only to keep their ground, but to press forward; not merely to defend themselves, but to attack their enemies. "Out of weakness they shall" so "wax strong," as to "turn to flight the armies of the aliens." He will, by the effectual operation of his Spirit, through the instrumentality of his word, render the very efforts of their enemies to subdue them, the means of calling forth into action a power of which they themselves were before unconscious, so as to compel them to say, with a new feeling of the depth of truth contained in the words, "When I am weak, then I am strong." Thus does "he give power to the faint, and to them who have no might he

[1] Eph. vi. 13–18. [2] Τοῦ πονηροῦ. [3] Isa. xli. 10. Jer. xxxii. 40.

increaseth strength;" so that, though "even the youths faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fail," they, "waiting on the Lord, renew their strength; they mount up on wings as eagles; they run, and are not weary; they walk, and are not faint."[1] Thus it is, that amid the infirmities of his people, "the power of Christ rests on them." They are made "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might;" and they "go in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only." "In the Lord, in whom they have righteousness, they also have strength."

(4.) *They shall be settled.*

The fourth and last promise is, "God will settle you." The word rendered "settle" is equivalent to make to rest securely, as a building on its foundations. The idea is, the design of these attacks of Satan is to drive you from the foundation, Jesus, and the truth as it is in Jesus; but God will render all these attempts ineffectual by his preparing you for them, stablishing you, and strengthening you under them, and, by enabling you to stand and withstand, he will make them the means of fixing you firmer on that foundation than ever. Such afflictions, instead of producing apostasy, produce perseverance. "We glory in tribulation," that is, suffering in the cause of Christ, produced by the influence of the adversary, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience," that is, perseverance, increased attachment to the Saviour and his cause. Satan desires to have Christians that he may sift them, and scatter them to the winds of heaven; but through the grace of the Father, and the prayers of the Son, their faith fails not, and to their own increased comfort and confirmed hope, by this very sifting, they are proved to be, not chaff, but the Lord's wheat, which is to be "gathered into his garner, while the chaff is burned with fire unquenchable." These afflictions both prove the soundness of the foundation, leading the Christian more narrowly to examine it, and prove, too, that he is really built on the foundation. The Christian who is enabled to triumph over temptation, is stronger than if he had never been tempted; and there is no such firm believer as he who has battled with and fairly overcome, through Him who loves him, all the doubts which the father of lies, and that most skilful sophister, the evil heart of unbelief under his influence, can suggest to the mind. This is the great object of God to settle his people on the foundation, the rock, Christ. "This," to borrow some of the beautiful thoughts of Leighton, "is the only thing that perfects and strengthens us. There is a wretched natural independency in us. We are apt to rest on something in ourselves. When we do so, we build castles in the air, imagining buildings without a foundation. A battle with our spiritual enemies will show us there is no safe footing there. If we do not seek firmer ground, we shall assuredly fall. Never shall we find safety, heart-peace, and progress in holiness, till we are driven from everything in ourselves, to make him all our strength, 'our rock, our fortress, our buckler, the horn of our salvation, and our high tower,' to do nothing, to attempt nothing, to hope for nothing, but in

[1] Isa. xl. 29–31.

him. Then shall we find his fulness and all-sufficiency, and be 'more than conquerors through him who hath loved us.' Few things in christian experience are more employed by God to bring his people into this state of settledness on the rock of Christ, than the afflictions rising out of the assaults of the evil one, and that resistance to these assaults, which are accomplished in the whole christian brotherhood in the world. Thus can God bring good out of evil; strengthen faith by what was meant to overthrow it; increase the holiness and comfort of his people by what was meant to involve them in guilt, and depravity, and misery; make the wrath of devils, as well as men, to praise him, while he restrains the remainder thereof. 'He shall deliver them out of the mouth of the lion;' ay, 'he shall deliver them from every evil work,' every mischievous device, every malignant attempt of their adversary or his agents, earthly or infernal, and 'preserve them unto his heavenly kingdom.'"

Such appears to be the import of the promise; such seems to be the perfecting, stablishing, strengthening, settling, of which the apostle speaks. To use the words of the pious and learned Bengel, "He shall perfect (that no defect may remain in you), he shall stablish (that ye may be guilty of no backsliding), he shall strengthen (that ye may overcome every adverse power), and thus he shall settle you:" establish you more firmly than ever on the foundation, by those very means which were intended to remove you from it, and to convert into an unsightly heap of ruins, all the holy dispositions, and all the glorious hopes, which, like a stately edifice, "polished after the similitude of a palace," rested on that foundation.

(5.) *He who does all this for them is God.*

This perfecting, and stablishing, and strengthening, and settling, are just what the Christian needs when called to combat, "not with flesh and blood, but with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places," and the assurance of obtaining it is well fitted to encourage and comfort him. But to realize this encouragement and consolation, he must "know and be sure" who it is that hath promised thus to perfect, and stablish, and strengthen, and settle. Such a promise from the most accomplished of men, from the highest of angels, from all good men and all good angels together, would sound like bitter mockery; but it is God who, by the mouth of his holy apostle, declares that he will perfect and stablish, strengthen and settle, the Christian combating with his subtle, active, cruel, and powerful spiritual adversary; and deeply as he feels how much is wanting in him for the conflict; how ready, how sure, if left to himself, to turn back in the day of battle; how powerless he is in the grasp of the strong man, the terrible one; how much in danger, so far as depends on anything in himself, of being permanently moved from his steadfastness, and torn from that rock of salvation on which the whole fabric of his holiness, and spiritual enjoyment, and hopes rest: this is enough to sustain and encourage him.

He can do all that he has here promised. He is infinite in power; and infinite, too, in wisdom. No enemy so powerful but he can re-

strain and subdue him; no enemy so crafty, but he can circumvent and disappoint him. No Christian so weak, but he can make him strong; no Christian so foolish, but he can make him wise. Is anything too hard for the Lord? To the Christian struggling with his spiritual foes, with a heart failing for fear, and an arm falling down with weariness, is addressed the words of the prophet: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding."[1] There is no situation in which, in resisting your adversary, you can be placed, however full of painful exertion, anxiety, and suffering, in which he cannot give support, from which he cannot give deliverance.

Then he is disposed to do all that he has promised. He is "rich in mercy;" he is "ready to forgive." The love that dictated the promise secures the accomplishment. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven," who is not evil, who is good, only good, good continually, infinitely benignant, whose nature, as well as name, is love, how much more shall he "give good gifts to his children" when they ask them? But this truth, so richly fraught with encouragement, will come more fully before us when we come to speak of the adjuncts of the promise, or of the manner in which it is given.

Finally, here, he who gives the promise will most assuredly perform it. He can do it; for he is infinitely powerful and wise: he is disposed to do it; for he is infinitely kind and compassionate: he will do it; for he is inviolably faithful. He can do all things, but he cannot lie. Nothing is impossible with him but the denying himself. "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent: hath he said it, and shall he not do it? hath he promised it, and shall he not make it good?" No, "heaven and earth may pass away;" we know they shall pass away; "but one iota, one tittle," of his declarations "shall not pass till all be fulfilled."[2] As certainly as God is powerful and wise, merciful and faithful, so certain is it that he will not abandon the Christian resisting the subtle, active, powerful, cruel adversary of his soul; but will "make him perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle" him, by the very means which were intended for his spiritual ruin, thus "disappointing the devices of the crafty one, taking the wise in his own cunning, and turning the counsel of the froward headlong,"[3] saving the poor from the mouth of the devourer, and rescuing them out of the hand of him who is mightier than they.[4]

Such is the promise; and is it not full of encouragement to the Christian amid the privations, and exertions, and sufferings, to which the resistance of his great adversary may expose him? Is it not well

[1] Isa. xl. 27, 28. [2] Num. xxiii. 19. Matt. v. 18. [3] Job v. 12.

[4] There is much emphasis given to the promise, by the insertion of the pronoun αὐτὸς between the nominative ὁ Θεὸς πάσης χάριτος and the verbs belonging to it, though it is not noticed in our version. It was just a thing for Bengel to notice. "Αὐτὸς, ipsevos tantum vigilate et resistite hosti; reliqua Deus præstabit."—Conf. אני Josh. xiii. 6; conf. 1, ej. cap.

fitted to fill his heart with that joy of the Lord which is the strength of his people; to make him thank God, and take courage, saying, "If God be with me, who can be against me? Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: though I fall, I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me. Greater is he who is with me than all that can be against me. Greater is He that is in us than he who is in the world." [1]

§ 2.—*The encouragement contained in the adjuncts of the promise.*

But even this is not all the encouragement and comfort which this passage is fitted to administer to the struggling christian warrior. The adjuncts of the promise have the same character with the promise itself; its manner as well as its matter is full of consolation. This is the next subject which calls for our consideration. What encouragement to him who resists the adversary to reflect, that He who has given to him such "exceeding great and precious promises," is "the God of all grace," the God "who has called him," "called him to his eternal glory in or by Christ Jesus," called him to this glory "after he has suffered a while!" These are fruitful themes, respecting which our meditation should be profitable as well as sweet, on which "our hearts should indite a good matter, and our tongues be as the pen of a ready writer."

(1.) *The God who has promised this is "the God of all grace."*

The first consolatory and encouraging consideration here brought forward is, that the God who has promised these blessings is the "God of all grace." The proper signification of grace is kindness, the disposition to communicate happiness; but the term is also often employed to denote those actions or gifts in which this disposition is manifested. In both of these closely related significations of the word, God is the "God of all grace."

He is the all-gracious God. His name is "the Lord; the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." His nature as well as his name is love. "Fury," malignity, passion, "is not in him;" and, from the benignity of his nature, he is "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." "This is his name, and this is his memorial to all generations." From his perfect holiness he cannot but hate sin, and punish the sinner "who goes on in his trespasses:" but he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" on the contrary, He "wills him to turn from his evil ways, that he may live," be saved; while he is "ready to forgive," and "delights in mercy," in reference to those who, by the faith of the truth, are "in Christ Jesus." Every obstacle which prevents the manifestation of his love to them is removed. "As a father pities his children, he pities them." "A woman may forget her sucking-child, she may not have compassion on the son of her womb;" but he never can forget them; and he can never remember them but with loving-kindness and tender mercy. And he

[1] Rom. viii. 1. Micah vii. 8. 1 John iv. 4.

rests in his love to them. He is "Jehovah, who changes not;" "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." "The mountains may depart, the hills may be removed; but God's loving-kindness shall not depart from them, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed by the Lord God, who has mercy on them."

Is this his character? Then assuredly, amid all their afflictions, his children, "the brotherhood," may have "abundant consolation and good hope." If he has the power—and who can doubt that?—he must sustain, and comfort, and deliver. He can never allow them to become the prey of His and their adversary, who, "like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." "He cannot deny himself;" and, if he cannot do this, he cannot but "deliver them out of the mouth of this lion;" he cannot but deliver them "from every evil work, and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom."[1] Being "the all-gracious God," he will assuredly "make them perfect, stablish, and strengthen them."

God is also the God of all grace, in the sense of benefit. He is the author and bestower of all true happiness. When he is termed "the God of all consolation," the meaning is, all true comfort comes from him, and he bestows on his people abundance of all they need. When he is termed "the God of peace," the meaning is, that he is the author and bestower of true peace. So, when he is called "the God of all grace," the meaning may be, all blessings come from him; He is their ever full, ever flowing fountain, and to his people he communicates them, in all the variety and abundance that their wants can require, or their capacities receive. He "blesses them with all spiritual and heavenly blessings." What can he want, all whose need the God of grace, of all grace, promises to supply, "according to his glorious riches?" He can, he will, fit for the combat; he can, he will, sustain during the conflict; he can, he will, make victorious in the conflict; he can, he will, reward after the conflict. If there be any necessary blessing not included in "all grace," then the struggling Christian might have some cause to despond; but when Jehovah, "God Almighty" (rather all-sufficient) says, I am "the God of all grace," and "my grace is sufficient for thee;" well may he "glory in tribulation," "count it all joy to be brought into manifold temptations," and sing with the apostle, "I have all, and abound; having nothing, I possess all things; I am complete in him. Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of the God of all grace may rest on me; though troubled on every side, I am not distressed; though perplexed, I am not in despair; though persecuted, I am not forsaken; though cast down, I am not destroyed."[2] The God of all grace has pledged his word and oath to me that I shall want no good thing; and what would I have, what could I have more?

(2.) *This God of all grace has "called" the Christian "in Christ Jesus."*

A second consoling and encouraging consideration is, this God of

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Ezek. xviii. 23, 32. Isa. liv. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 18.
[2] 2 Cor. i. 3. Eph. i. 3. Col. iv. 19. Gen. xvii. 1. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

all grace has called the Christian in Christ Jesus. The "called" is one of the distinguishing denominations of true Christians; in its fuller form "the called of Christ Jesus:" "the called according to God's purpose and grace;" "the called who obtain the promised eternal inheritance;" and their calling is designated "a high calling," "a holy calling," a "calling not according to works, but according to God's own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." All mankind are called to God's service; and all mankind, to whom revelation comes, are "called" by God to the enjoyment of his favor, as well as to obedience to his will; but in the case of the great majority, they are "called" in vain, ineffectually called. They will not listen to the call; they very imperfectly understand it; they obstinately refuse to obey it. And were it not that the sovereign kindness of God accompanies, in certain cases, the call of Providence and revelation, with the effectual operation of his Spirit, the outward call with the inward call, this would be universally the case with mankind. All would continue in a state of ignorance, unbelief, disobedience, and alienation from God. All men would always be what all by nature are, "without God in the world."

But in the case of "a multitude that no man can number," God, in the exercise of his sovereign mercy, accompanies the call of his word and providence with the special influence of his Spirit; so that the calling is not in vain, but effectual. "It comes not in word merely, but in power, with the Holy Ghost, and much assurance." The sinner hears the call of the God of all grace; he understands it, he believes it, he is sweetly constrained to comply with it. This calling is the same thing which the apostle styles "election according to the foreknowledge and purpose of God," by which Christians are spiritually separated from the rest of mankind, and put in possession of the blessings which flow from the shedding of the blood of sprinkling, which "speaketh better things than that of Abel." This "effectual calling," which is one of the characteristic blessings of the christian salvation, and is the gate by which we enter into the enjoyment of all the rest, is well described in our Shorter Catechism as "a work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel." "This is a call," as Leighton beautifully says, "that goes deeper than the ear, a word spoken home to within, a touch of the Spirit of God on the heart, which hath a magnetic power to draw it, so that it cannot choose but follow; and yet freely and sweetly chooses to follow; doth most gladly open to let in Jesus Christ, and his sweet government, upon his own terms; takes him, and all the reproaches and troubles that can come with him; and well it may, seeing, beyond a little passing trouble, abiding eternal glory."

This calling is said to be "in Christ Jesus," that is, either 'persons standing in a peculiar relation to Christ Jesus, identified as it were with him, are its subjects;' or, "through Christ Jesus," through his mediation, in consequence of his atonement, by his Spirit and Word.

It is probably the last of these that is here the apostle's idea. Men are called by the Father through the Son. This fundamental blessing was enjoyed by those to whom the apostle wrote. The God of all grace had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light; out of subjection to sin, and the world, and the god of this world, into the glorious liberty of his children. The communication of this blessing is a proof that God loves with a special love the individual on whom it is conferred; and a distinct intimation, that all the other blessings of that salvation, of which this is a constituent part, shall in due time be bestowed. The fact of their being called by the God of all grace, involves in it satisfactory evidence, that their spiritual adversary shall not ultimately prevail against them, that their afflictions cannot be permanent, and that they shall be made conducive to their final salvation. Listen to the Apostle Paul's development of this argument. "We know that all things"—he is referring to the afflictions which are accomplished in the brotherhood in this world—"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" [1] Can the wiles or the ferocity of the roaring lion, the fraud or the fury of the great adversary, accomplish OUR ruin, who are the called, the called of the God of all grace?

(3.) *The God of all grace has called Christians to his eternal glory.*

A third consolatory and encouraging consideration is, that "the God of all grace has called the Christian to his eternal glory." The phrase, "called unto God's eternal glory," may either signify, called in order eternally to promote the glory of God, or called to enjoy or participate in the eternal glory of God. In either case, the words express a truth, and a truth well fitted to comfort and encourage Christians while struggling with their spiritual enemies.

The calling of the Christian, and the conferring on him all the blessings of the christian salvation which grow out of it, have for their ultimate object, like everything else in the new creation as in the old, the manifestation of God, the illustration of his excellence, the display of his glory. This idea is very finely brought out by the apostle, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace*, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches

[1] Rom. viii. 28–31.

of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that, in the dispensation of the fulness of the times, he might gather together into one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will; that we should be *to the praise of his glory*, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted," or rather have received an inheritance, "after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance," both ours and yours, "until the redemption of the purchased possession, *to the praise of his glory*."[1] Were the Christian to be allowed to fall a prey to his spiritual enemies, his calling, instead of being to God's eternal glory, would give cause to the adversary to speak reproachfully, saying, "the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he had promised them." But Jehovah is determined, even through means of those babes and sucklings whom he calls, to perfect praise to himself, and to "still the enemy and the avenger." He has called them to be his people, and "formed them for himself, and they shall show forth his praise." His power, and wisdom, and faithfulness, and kindness, shall be illustriously displayed in the salvation of all the called ones. "His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."[2] This is truth, important truth; truth naturally enough expressed by the words, and truth well fitted to encourage and strengthen the Christian when conflicting with his great adversary.

Yet we are inclined to think the other view of the words expresses the apostle's thought. He has called them to a participation of his eternal glory. The glory of God sometimes signifies the approbation of God. Thus the Jews are said to "receive honor (the same word) one of another, and not to seek the honor that cometh from God only." Thus, all are said to "have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and believers, justified through believing, are represented as "exulting in the hope of that glory," that approbation, of which they had come short, and in which true glory and happiness consist. Here, as in some other places, there can be little doubt that "the glory of God" is the celestial blessedness; but still it is the celestial blessedness in a particular aspect. The glory of God is that which makes God glorious; his eternal glory that which makes him eternally glorious. Now, what is it that makes God glorious? His own inherent excellences, especially his moral excellences, his righteousness and benignity; in one word, his holiness. He is "glorious in holiness." Now, the grand ultimate object of the calling of the Christian is, that he, to the highest degree of which his nature is capable, may be made a partaker of God's holiness, which is his glory. He is called to the fellowship, as well as predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son, who is the "brightness of

[1] Eph. i. 3–14. [2] Num. xiv. 16. Psal. viii. 2. Isa. xliii. 21; xlvi. 10.

his glory and the express image of his person." It is the purpose of God in calling him, and in giving him the adoption of sons to which he has been predestinated, that he shall be holy, as He, the holy, holy, holy One, is holy, perfect as he is perfect. It is his purpose that, in the kingdom of their Father, the Father of Lights, his called ones shall shine forth radiant with his light, glorious in his glory; and in the only sense in which eternity can be truly predicted of them, or of anything that belongs to them, that their glory shall be eternal, that "they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and like stars in the firmament, forever and ever." Now, no assault from Satan, no calamities, no afflictions, can prevent this glorious consummation—nay, all their afflictions will be found to have been but disciplinary means of preparing them for this grand result of all the Divine dispensations to them—the making them "partakers of his holiness," which is his glory.[1]

(4.) *The afflictions are moderate in degree, short in duration, and form a part of the Divine plan for their ultimate salvation.*

A fourth consolatory and encouraging consideration suggested, is derived from the peculiar character of the afflictions to which the brotherhood are exposed; they are comparatively moderate in degree and short in duration; they form a part of the Divine plan resulting from Divine appointment; and they are closely connected with the great end of their calling,—their coming to a participation in the glory of God. The God of all grace has called you to his eternal glory "after ye have suffered a while," or a little. These words, "after ye have suffered a while," have been closely connected by some with the clause that follows, "After ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The laws of the language would warrant either mode of connection; but it is plain that the promise is not one which is not to be fulfilled till Christians have suffered a while. The first promise refers to preparation for suffering, the two next to help under suffering, the last to the happy result of suffering. God calls his people to participate in his eternal glory, but not to participate in it "till they have suffered a while," or a little. The word may refer either to time or degree. In either case, a truth, and a consolatory one, is expressed. The afflictions to which the brotherhood are exposed in this world are comparatively moderate in degree. They are often heavy when compared with those of other men, and are often felt as heavy by those who bear them, making them breathe out, "I am oppressed; undertake for me." They are always lighter than they easily might be; always lighter than strict justice would require them to be. Everything to a sinner, short of the severest suffering he is capable of, is mercy. God does not, however, "suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but with the temptation gives a way of escape, that they may be able to bear it;" and especially they are moderate when compared with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which is to follow them.

[1] 1 Cor. i. 9. Rom. viii. 29. Heb. xii. 10.

They are limited in duration. Seasons of very severe affliction are not ordinarily of long duration; they bear usually but a small proportion to the whole of human life. How inconceivably small a proportion do they bear to the eternity of coming glory! Surely, then, whether he look on their measure or their period, their degree or their duration, the Christian may well "reckon the sufferings of the present time not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in him."

Then, these afflictions are a part of the Divine plan. It is as much a part of the Divine plan to put them in possession of the fellowship of his eternal glory after they have suffered a while, as to put them in possession of it at all. "It is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom;" but it is equally the Father's good pleasure that "through much tribulation they enter into that kingdom." It is his determination that they "shall reign with Christ," but it is equally his determination that they "shall first suffer with him."[1]

And finally, here, this connection, though an appointed one, is not an arbitrary one. The glory not only comes after the sufferings, but it is, in some sense, the result of them. Afflictions are, under the Divine blessing, appropriate means of sanctification; of forming the character which fits for the holy happiness of heaven; "that prepared place for a prepared people." The truth on this subject is strikingly stated by the apostle from his own experience: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are unseen are eternal." "Who would refuse to suffer a while, a little while, anything outward or inward He sees fit? How soon shall this be over, past, and overpaid in the very entry, the beginning of that glory, that shall never end!"[2]

IV.—CONCLUSION.

It now only remains that we shortly illustrate the concluding clause of the verse, which is very generally considered as a doxology. The words are, "To him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen." The word *be* is inserted by our translators, who consider the clause as an ascription of glory and dominion to God. The word *is* might as well have been inserted, in which case it is an assertion that glory and dominion belong to God. Had the preceding verse been a prayer or a thanksgiving, the words would likely have been meant as a doxology; but following a promise, they seem to state something corresponding to the promise. "His is the glory forever and ever," and, therefore, he can confer on his people that glory to which he has called them, after they have suffered a while. He has not only an essential glory peculiar to himself, and of which no creature can participate.

[1] Luke xii. 32. Acts xiv. 32. Rom. viii. 17. [2] Leighton. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17.

He has a communicable glory; "the riches of his glory," as the apostle expresses it, by the bestowing of which on others he can make them glorious. He is "the Father of glory," as well as the God of all grace, who can give not only grace but also glory. And as "glory forever and ever" belongs to Him who has "called Christians to his eternal glory after they have suffered a while;" so "dominion" (a word denoting both power and authority) "forever and ever" belongs to Him, who, as the God of grace, promises that he will make perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle his people. He has power and right to do whatever pleases him, and therefore can do what he has said. "His is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all in the heaven and in the earth is his; his is the kingdom, and he is exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of Him, and he reigneth over all; and in his hand is power and might; and in his hand it is to make great, and give strength to all." He who has glory forever and ever, can give to his called that fellowship of his eternal glory which he has promised; and he whose is the dominion, the power, and the authority forever, is "of power to establish his people according to the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ." He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." "He can make them perfect in every good work to do his will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight." He is "able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."[1] It deserves notice that the apostle concludes his epistle as he began it, by turning the minds of those to whom he wrote to God, and to the same features in the Divine character—those which make him a fit object of our love and dependence—his kindness and his might. In the beginning he speaks of Him as the God of abundant mercy, who has power to keep his people for the inheritance he has destined for them, and for which he is preparing them: and here he speaks of Him as the God of all grace, whose is the dominion, to whom all the power and authority rightfully belong.

The apostle adds an emphatic "Amen"—a word, in reference to statement, expressive of firm faith; in reference to promises, of confident hope and ardent desire. In the first instance it is equivalent to, 'It is most certainly so; this is the very truth most sure.' In the second, 'I trust it shall be so; I desire that it may be so.' Such, then, is the comfort and encouragement by which the apostle seeks to strengthen the brotherhood amid the afflictions which must be accomplished in them in the world.

If anything extrinsic could add force to the sentiments expressed in these words—sentiments so instinct with life, so fitted to impart spiritual vigor to the exhausted spirit of the Christian, worn out with watching the wiles and resisting the attacks of his great adversary—it is to be found in the circumstances of him who uttered them. "Truth," such truth, "from his lips prevails with double sway." The word of warning, the word of instruction, the word of promise, the word of encouragement, come all with peculiar force

[1] 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12. Jude 24.

from the lips of him to whom, on a most memorable occasion, the Master said, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

He speaks the things which he knew, he testifies what he had seen and felt. He had disregarded the Master's warning, and the consequence had been shameful discomfiture in his conflict with the great enemy; aggravated sin, followed by deep penitence, and confirmed attachment to the cause of Christ. He had found how faithful he is who had promised, and how able he is to do as he had said. He had preserved him from apostasy when on its very brink; and, notwithstanding the partial success of his spiritual adversary, he had "stablished, strengthened, settled" him; "set him on a rock and established his goings."

How emphatic the warning, "Your enemy, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," from him who had experienced both his wiles and his ferocity, and would bear about with him the scars of his wounds while he lived!

How forcible the injunction, "Resist the devil;" and that you may do so, "Be sober, and wakeful, and steadfast in the faith," from him, who, notwithstanding repeated warnings, did not watch and pray, and, therefore, entered into temptation, and fell before it, and whose failure in faith had brought him so near destruction and despair; had made him fall into sin, and but for the God of all grace would have made him fall into perdition!

How consoling and encouraging the promise, "The God of all grace, who hath called you unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, shall make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you; His is the glory and the dominion forever and ever," from him whom the God of all grace, in the person of his Son, had so "out of weakness made strong," so strengthened in the faith as to make him one of the chief pillars of the church while he lived; and when he died, enabled him to glorify God, confessing, amid the protracted tortures of a peculiarly cruel martyrdom, the Master whom once he had thrice denied!

We cannot help thinking that the Saviour's words, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," were ringing in the apostle's ears when he wrote these words. And, certainly, never were addressed to the tempted, struggling, worn out, afflicted christian soldier, words more full of warning, instruction, consolation, and encouragement. They have, by the accompanying power of the Spirit of Jesus, strengthened many a brother. They have been "words in season" to many a tempted, afflicted, perplexed, downcast, weary heart; and will continue to be so, as long as these afflictions continue to be accomplished in the brotherhood in the world.

Oh, may we, my brethren, through their means, be made humble and cautious, vigilant and believing, "steadfast and immovable," rooted and built up in Christ, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath deliv-

ered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us unto the kingdom of his dear Son; so that, full of the strength which is the result of the joy of the Lord, glorying in tribulation, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, we may "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."[1] "Consider what has been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

[1] Col. i. 10–13.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

POSTSCRIPT OF THE EPISTLE.

1 Pet. v. 12–14.—By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you (as I suppose), I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you: and so doth Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and "all Scripture," too, "is profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work." In the mines of Peru, there are veins of peculiar riches, but even their rubbish is valuable. In the Holy Scriptures, there are portions of peculiar importance, excellence, and usefulness, but there is nothing trivial, nothing valueless in them. The superficial thinker may, indeed, find it difficult, it may be impossible, for him to derive instruction or improvement from passages of Scripture, and may, on this account, rashly call in question their Divine origin, or indulge in reflections against the Divine wisdom, for allowing such a passage a place in the inspired volume; but it is his own imbecility, or ignorance, or inattention, that is wholly to blame; for it may be safely affirmed, that there is no passage of Scripture respecting which the pious, diligent, docile inquirer, cannot easily see that it may have served, or may yet serve, some important and useful purpose; and that there are very few from which, after serious consideration, he cannot draw for himself lessons which may be turned to account for the guidance of his conduct, and the improvement of his character.

To be able to extract from what have been called the barren, from what ought to be called the less exuberant, passages of Scripture, the instruction, and warning, and reproof, and consolation which they are intended and fitted to communicate, is a talent which every Christian should be desirous of acquiring, as, without the possession and employment of it, a considerable part of those Scriptures which are "able to make men wise to salvation," will be utterly useless to him; and it is not one of the least important duties of a public teacher of Christianity, to instruct his audience in the best way of extracting spiritual improvement from this class of scripture passages; on the one hand, guarding them against that passion for allegory, which leads men to make the plainest statements of the sacred writers the vehicle of the dreams of their own imagination, thus converting a

Divine oracle into a human figment; and, on the other, showing how important purposes are served, by what at first sight may seem inappropriate and unnecessary statements, and how replete such passages, when viewed in their connection and design, often are with religious and moral instruction.

The subject of to-day's discourse, the postscript of the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter, belongs to the class of scripture passages of which we have been speaking. It is not, indeed, to be compared, in point of intrinsic importance, deep personal interest, and extensive usefulness, with the admirable doctrinal and practical discussions by which it is preceded, and which, for a considerable time past, have not unpleasantly nor unprofitably, I trust, formed the subject of our consideration, when we have come together on the first day of the week, to wait on the "doctrine of the apostles;" but it is far indeed from being unimportant, uninteresting, or useless; and if it want many of the attractions which belong to them, it will be found to have attractions peculiar to itself. It is with the word, as it is with the works of God. "There is one glory in the sun, and another glory in the moon, and another glory in the stars, and one star differeth from another star in glory." Let us look at the passage a little more closely, that we may perceive its meaning and ascertain its use.

It obviously forms a postscript to the epistle, which, as a doctrinal and hortatory address, is most appropriately and gracefully concluded in the eleventh verse. This postscript is occupied with recapitulation, salutation, exhortation, and benediction. The recapitulation is contained in the twelfth verse. The salutation in the thirteenth. The exhortation in the first clause, and the benediction in the last clause, of the fourteenth. Let us attend to them briefly, in their order.

I.—RECAPITULATION.

It has been supposed by some interpreters of high name, that the twelfth verse has in it nothing recapitulatory, and that the epistle referred to in it, is not that which the apostle had just finished, but one that he had sent to the same churches on some former occasion. This supposition is an entirely gratuitous one. It is not required by the words, though, were it otherwise supported, the words might easily be reconciled with it. But there is no trace in Scripture, or in ecclesiastical history, of the apostle having written such an epistle; and there is satisfactory evidence that he did not write it, for he terms an epistle which he subsequently addressed to these churches, his *second* epistle. "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which, I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

The recapitulation refers to three things, the *subject* of the epistle, and the duty of Christians in reference to it; the *form* of it, a testimony and an exhortation, and a brief testimony and exhortation; the testimony, that "the grace of God," which is the great subject of the epistle, is "the true grace of God," and the exhortation to stand, with

regard to that grace; and, finally, the *mode* of writing or transmitting the epistle, "By Silvanus, a faithful brother."

CHAP. I.—THE SUBJECT OF THE EPISTLE.

§ 1.—*The grace of God.*

"The grace of God" properly signifies the kindness, the free favor of God, as a principle in the Divine mind; but is often employed to signify the deeds of kindness, the gifts and the benefits, in which this principle finds expression. It has been common to interpret the phrase here as equivalent to the gospel, the revelation of God's grace; and the apostle has been considered as affirming that the doctrine which those he was writing to had embraced, and to which they had adhered, to use the Apostle Paul's phrase, "which they had received, and in which they stood," was the true gospel. But I doubt if the gospel is ever called "the grace of God" in the New Testament; and I equally doubt whether the words, thus understood, are an accurate statement of what this epistle actually contains. There are just two other passages in the New Testament in which "the grace of God" has been supposed to be a designation of the gospel. After stating the message of mercy which the ministers of reconciliation are called to deliver, the apostle in his Epistle to the Corinthians, says, "We beseech you that ye receive not the grace," or this grace, "of God in vain."[1] The reference here is, no doubt, to the gospel, but the meaning of the phrase, "the grace of God," is plainly just this Divine favor, this benefit which so expresses, and, as it were, embodies the Divine grace. And, in the Epistle to Titus, the same apostle states, that "the grace of God, bringing salvation to all," has been manifested, or has "appeared, teaching" those who apprehend it "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world."[2] The grace of God is often said to mean here the gospel, but the gospel is the manifestation, the revelation of this grace; and the truth taught in this passage is, that the free, sovereign mercy of God, when it is apprehended by the sinner, is the true principle of holiness in his heart and life. Let a man but really believe the grace of God, know it in truth, and he can be an ungodly, immoral man no longer. And as there is no satisfactory evidence that "the grace of God" is, properly speaking, a synonyme for the gospel; so, on the other hand, if we read this epistle carefully, we shall not find that the sum of it is a testimony that the gospel, as received and held by the churches addressed, was the true gospel. That question is never mooted, but obviously throughout taken for granted. It would be a correct account of the Epistle to the Galatians, that it is a testimony that the gospel preached to them by the apostle was, in opposition to that preached to them by the Judaizing teachers, the true gospel; but the character of *this* epistle is in no degree controversial. What "the grace of God" in the passage before us means, will be more satisfactorily ascertained, by inquiring what it means in the epistle of which it is represented as

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 1. [2] Tit. ii. 11, 12.

one of the great subjects. In the tenth verse of the first chapter, the apostle speaks of "the grace" of which the ancient prophets prophesied as to come to Christians, and in the thirteenth verse of that chapter, of "the grace which was to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ." That grace is obviously the christian salvation in its heavenly and spiritual blessings, enjoyed partially on earth, fully in heaven. This grace is a leading subject of the epistle. The specific nature, and transcendent glory and excellence of those blessings, in which the grace of God is manifested, are declared. Christians are represented as "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God;" spiritually separated from the world; sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ; begotten to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; as having tasted that the Lord is gracious, by being constituted a chosen generation, a spiritual temple, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; as having 'salvation,' complete deliverance from all evil, laid up for them in heaven, where it is ready to be revealed in the last time, while they are kept for it by the power of God through faith, and on receiving which, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus, they will be glad with exceeding joy, rejoicing "with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." This is "the grace of God" concerning which the apostle here says he had given a testimony in the epistle which he has just closed.

§ 2.—*The Christian's duty in reference to this grace, "to stand."*

The other subject of the epistle, according to its author, is the Christian's duty in reference to this grace of God. At first sight, the words in which we think the duty of Christians, in reference to the grace, is very briefly, but very comprehensively summed up—the words rendered by our translators "in which ye stand," seem merely to be a part of the testimony respecting "the grace of God," and to denote rather the Christian's privilege than his duty; just as when the Apostle Paul says, "By faith ye have entrance into this grace wherein ye stand."[1] But the two expressions are not the same. The phrase before us is literally "into which," which may mean, in reference to which, or until which, but which cannot mean strictly *in* which.[2] It deserves notice, that the apostle speaks of having exhorted in the epistle; but, as the words are ordinarily understood, there is no subject of exhortation referred to. In some ancient manuscripts the reading is not "ye stand," but "stand ye;"[3] expressive not of an assertion, but of a command or exhortation. If that reading be adopted, and it has been by some learned men, then the meaning is, "in reference to which grace of God," or until which grace of God is fully brought unto you, "stand ye." This most certainly is the sum and substance of the duty enjoined on Christians in this epistle; the standing firm, amid all temptations, in the faith and practice of Christianity with a reference to the grace of Christ, as

[1] Rom. v. 2.
[2] Εἰς never can mean ἐν; as "motion towards" can never be identified with "rest in."
[3] Στῆτε. Lachmann.

persons who have already been made partakers of it, as persons who hope to be made partakers of it in far larger measure, and to obtain full participation of it through "standing." As the whole doctrinal subject of the epistle is the grace of Christ, so the whole practical subject of the epistle is the duty of Christians in reference to that grace, and the whole of that duty may be summed up in one word, "stand." The whole practical part of the epistle is just the development of the first exhortation: "Wherefore," that is, seeing ye have received these promises and hopes, "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." This is a favorite compendium of christian duty with the Apostle Paul.[1]

CHAP. II.—THE FORM OF THE EPISTLE.

It is a testimony and exhortation respecting the grace of God.

The apostle notices not only the subjects of the epistle, but the *form* in which he has treated them. His statements with regard to the grace of God take the form of "a testimony." His statements with regard to the Christian's duty take the form of "an exhortation," "I have written, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God, in reference to which do ye stand." We would naturally have expected, from "exhorting" coming before "testifying," that the sum of the exhortation should have preceded the sum of the testimony. But it is a common peculiarity in Hebrew composition, of which we have many instances in the New Testament, after dividing a subject into two parts, to take up the second part first, and then revert to the first. It would be more according to the usage of modern language to say, "Testify that the grace of God, which ye as Christians enjoy, is the true grace of God, and exhorting you to stand in reference to this grace."

The testimony in the epistle respecting the grace of God which they enjoyed, that is, the blessings of the christian salvation, is, that it is the true grace of God. The sum of that part of the epistle that is occupied with doctrine is just, Ye Christians are the *true* spiritual people of God, of whom the Jews, his ancient external people, were types, and the blessings you enjoy are the true spiritual blessings of which the external blessings of the ancient economy were the types. To use the language of John, "They out of the fulness of him, who is the Only-begotten of God, the revealer of him in whose bosom he was from the beginning, who is full of grace and truth, true grace, had received grace for," in the room of "grace," the blessings of the new dispensation in the room of the blessings of the old; "for the law," which was a grace, a favor, and a great one, "came by Moses, but the grace and truth," the true grace, the great manifestation of

[1] Cor. xvi. 13. Gal. v. 1. Eph. vi. 14. Phil. iv. 1. 2 Thess. ii. 15.

the love of God in the blessings of a spiritual and eternal salvation, "came by Jesus Christ."[1] This, says Peter, is "the grace that is come to you," and "this is the true grace of God."

The apostle's declaration on this subject takes the form of a testimony. Not a demonstration on abstract principles, not a statement of his own individual opinion, but the declaration of a testimony with which, in common with his apostolic brethren, he had been "put in trust" by God. "The grace" to be brought to the true people of God under the Messiah, was "a mystery kept secret from former ages and generations;" "as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God had prepared for them that love him." That was "the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God had ordained before the world, unto the glory" of his people under the last and best dispensation of his grace. "But God revealed these things unto his holy apostles by his Spirit, and they, having received the Spirit which is of God, and having the mind of Christ, testified the things which he revealed to them, not in words taught by man's wisdom, but in words taught by the Holy Ghost."[2]

As the declaration respecting truth took the form of "testimony," so the declaration with regard to duty took the form of "exhortation." The practical part of the epistle is not a dry system of ethics, but a warm exhortation, showing Christians what it is to stand, how they were to be enabled to stand, and why they should stand.

The apostle further notices, that the testimony and the exhortation contained in this epistle were a brief testimony and exhortation: "In few words exhorting and testifying." Here, as well as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle says, at the close of the comparatively long Epistle to the Hebrews, "I have written a letter to you in few words," we apprehend the reference is rather to the condensation than to the brevity, strictly so called, of the compositions. This is not a short epistle, and the Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the longest in the New Testament; but there is no unnecessary diffuseness, no waste of words; and on this account, as well as higher ones, Peter's letter, like Paul's, is "weighty and powerful." In our illustrations of the epistle, we have had abundant opportunities of observing in how few words Peter wraps up pregnant thoughts, exhibits far-reaching views.

What the apostle represents as the characteristics of his epistle, are equally those of the apostolic epistles generally. They are occupied with brief, condensed testimonies and exhortations respecting the grace of God, and the duty of Christians in reference to that grace. And as the apostles' discourses, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, are the models which christian ministers should follow in preaching the gospel to the world lying under the wicked one; so their epistles are the models which they should follow in teaching the doctrine and the law of Christ to the churches of the saints, to "them who have believed through grace." Every christian teacher's system of instruction should embrace in it a clear, distinct statement of the true grace of God, of the exceeding great and precious blessings of the

[1] John i. 16, 17. [2] Rom. xvi. 25. 1 Cor. ii. 7, 9, 13.

christian salvation; he should conduct his people throughout the length and breadth of the goodly heritage assigned them even here below; and he should often take them up as it were into an exceeding high mountain, and, teaching them to apply the prospective glass of the gospel to the eye of faith, show them the glories of the kingdom which awaits them in the land that is far off; if he does not do this, he is not a minister of the gospel at all; and his system should equally embrace in it a clear statement and a powerful enforcement of the duties which lie on Christians, as partakers of the grace of God in truth. And his doctrinal preaching must all wear the form of "a testimony," a declaration, of what God the Lord says, of what is the mind of Christ, of what the Holy Ghost has declared,—not of human conjectures and reasonings, but of Divine revelations; and his practical preaching must all have the form of exhortation,—not occupying the mind with ethical disquisitions and questions, but pressing home clearly announced Divine injunctions on the conscience and the heart. The testimony and the exhortation must go together, and be presented as closely connected,—the one the foundation, the other the building. The grace, the true grace, must be declared, in order that they who believe in Christ, may be careful to maintain good works. It is also very desirable that all this should be done briefly, "in few words;" that is, that the teaching, though plain, should be condensed. The time afforded for christian teaching is necessarily very limited, and many Christians have few means of christian instruction besides public teaching. It is therefore a matter of great importance that the discourses of a christian minister should contain as much matter as can be brought into them, without overtasking the minds of the hearers.

CHAP. III.—THE MODE OF THE WRITING OR TRANSMISSION OF THE EPISTLE.

The only other thing in the recapitulatory part of the postscript that requires attention, is the mode of the writing or of the transmission of the letter,—"By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written." In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of Paul, we read of a person of this name. In the Epistles he is always termed Silvanus, in the Acts his name is always contracted into Silas. Some have supposed from the last name and Tertius, the one a Hebrew, the other a Latin word, having the same signification, that he is the person who performed the office of amanuensis to Paul when writing to the Romans.[1] All that we know of him with certainty is, that he was a distinguished "teacher and prophet" in the church of Jerusalem, "a chief man among the brethren;" that he was associated along with Barsabas, surnamed Judas, and sent with Paul and Barnabas to the Gentile churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, to carry those letters to the apostles, elders and

[1] Acts xv. 22, 27, 34, 40; xvi. 25; xvii. 7, 10, 15. 2 Cor. ii. 19. 1 Thess. i. 1. Rom. xvi. 22. Burmanni Exercitationes, p. 461. Wolfii Curæ, 2 Cor. i. 19. Walchii. Miscellan. Exercitat. ii. p. 39. Capelli Spicileg. p. 97. Witsii Meletem. Leid. p. 99. Hilleri Onomasticon, p. 680.

brethren, which contained their decision of the question respecting the obligation of the law on christian Gentiles which had been referred to them; that on the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, he accompanied the former on his journey through Asia Minor to Macedonia; that he remained behind at Berea for a short time, when Paul was obliged to flee from that place, but rejoined the apostle at Corinth; and that he is mentioned along with Timothy by the apostle in the inscription of the Epistles to the Thessalonians. It would appear that he had gone, it may be sent by Paul, into the Parthian empire, where Peter seems to have been when he wrote this epistle; for the tradition that this is another person of the same name has no foundation.

It has been made a question whether Silvanus was Peter's amanuensis in writing the epistle, or his messenger in carrying it into Asia Minor and the adjacent regions. The expressions are applicable to either case, and it is quite possible he might be both. Had he meant to remain with Peter, it is likely his salutation would have been given as well as Mark's, and the phraseology is that commonly used in reference to the bearers of the apostolic letters.

Peter describes Silvanus as a "brother." All men are brothers. "Have we not one Father? hath not one God created us?" "for we are all *his* offspring."[1] All Christians are brothers. "One is your Father, and ye are all brethren," says our Lord: "holy brethren," as the apostle has it, partakers of the heavenly calling." All christian office-bearers are brothers. Thus Peter speaks of his beloved brother Paul.[2] It is in this last sense probably that Peter here uses the appellation. We know that Silas was a teacher and a prophet, and we know that, when the whole church are called "saints," the office-bearers are distinguished by being called "brethren."[3] The word "faithful," the epithet given to Silvanus, sometimes signifies believing, sometimes trustworthy, sometimes distinguished by fidelity. I have no doubt it was applicable to Silvanus in all these shades of meaning. As the word is connected with "to you," for it is not "I wrote to you," but "a faithful brother to you," I think it likely that it was meant to convey the two last ideas, a minister of Christ who has proved himself trustworthy by his faithful discharge of duty to you.

The parenthetical words rendered "as I suppose,"[4] do not imply the idea of uncertainty, as our English word 'suppose' does. It is the word the apostle uses when he says, "We *conclude* that a man is justified by faith, and not by works of the law," "I *reckon* the sufferings of the present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed," "Abraham *accounted* that God was able to raise the dead."[5] There was no doubt in any of these cases, and we have no cause to think there was any doubt here either. It is, "I have sent my letter by Silvanus, and the reason why I have done so is, that I have perfect confidence in his fidelity, and know that he has approved himself a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf." The apostles were accustomed to send their letters, not by ordinary mes-

[1] Mal. ii. 10. Acts xvii. 28. [2] Matt. xxiii. 8. Heb. iii. 1. 2 Pet. iii. 15.
[3] Phil. iv. 21, 22. [4] Ὡς λογίζομαι. [5] Rom. iii. 28; viii. 18. Heb. xi. 19.

sengers, but by individuals of known and accredited character. Paul sent the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians by Tychicus; the First Epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians by Timothy; the Second to the Corinthians by Titus; the Epistle to Philemon by Onesimus; the Epistle to the Romans by Phebe, a deaconess. Thus two objects were gained: the apostles were assured that the epistles would be delivered, and the churches assured that the epistles were not surreptitious. It is a piece of christian wisdom to employ men in engagements for which they are peculiarly fitted. Silvanus, intimately acquainted with the churches to whom the apostle wrote, was far better fitted to be his messenger, than an equally good and gifted man who was a stranger to them. Silvanus bringing the letter would be to them abundant proof of its authenticity. And it is exceedingly becoming in men who, like Peter, are pillars in the church, men of long standing and high influence, to comfort the hearts and increase the usefulness of their younger brethren, by, on proper occasions, proclaiming the confidence they have in them, and the esteem with which they regard them: and, on the other hand, nothing is more unworthy than for one of Christ's servants, through little jealousies, to withhold from another all the support which the seasonable expression of merited good opinion is calculated to communicate. So much for the recapitulation.

II.—THE SALUTATION.

The salutation contained in the 13th verse is in these words: "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son." To salute is to kiss or embrace; here it plainly means to cherish and express cordial affection, of which a salute is the token.

§ 1.—*The salutation of the Church in Babylon.*

You will notice that the words "church that is," are printed in italics, intimating that there is nothing in the original to answer to them. The text literally rendered is, "She at Babylon, co-elect, saluteth you." It has been a question among interpreters, whether the person here mentioned is a real or figurative person, an individual or a society. Some have supposed that it refers to some christian woman, perhaps of the name of Suneclecta, the Greek word rendered "elected together with you," probably of great worth and usefulness, and perhaps rank and wealth, resident at Babylon, well known for her good works—one like John's "elect lady;" though some have supposed that she and her elect sister were sister churches, and their children the church members. Others have supposed that it was Peter's "sister-wife," that is, christian wife, whom we know from the Apostle Paul he was accustomed "to lead about" with him in his apostolic labors, and who was at this time residing in Babylon, and that Marcus, mentioned immediately after, was not Mark the evangelist, but their son. Either of these suppositions, no doubt,

may be true; but the probability seems on the side of the view taken by our translators, and by the great body of interpreters in all ages. "She at or in Babylon, co-elect," seems to be the christian society there.

It has been disputed whether Babylon is to be understood mystically or literally here; whether it means Rome, which in the Apocalypse is called Babylon, or Jerusalem, which, now apostate, better deserved that name than her own, or the city in Chaldea so well known both in profane and sacred history. In the absence of anything like evidence on the other side, we must hold that whatever Babylon may signify in a book full of symbols, here it must be interpreted just as we do Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Our own city is sometimes called Athens, from its situation and from its being a seat of learning; but it would not do to argue that a letter came from Edinburgh because it was dated from Athens. It is remarkable that the Roman Catholics, who are very shy of admitting that Rome is the Babylon of the Apocalypse, generally hold that it is referred to here. The reason is, that if Babylon do not mean Rome here, there is nothing in Scripture that can be made to look like evidence for the fact, on which the whole enormous fabric of the papal supremacy is built, that Rome was at any time the residence of Peter. So far from being able to prove that the Pope is the legitimate successor of Peter in a universal episcopate, of which Rome, the capital of the world, was the appropriate seat, there is no evidence in Scripture that he was ever in that city; and all that ecclesiatical history makes in some measure probable is, that he came there to suffer martyrdom. Surely those who can believe such things, on such evidence, are given up to strong delusions.

Allowing Babylon to be the proper name of the place referred to, it has been questioned whether it refers to the city generally known both in profane and sacred history by that appellation, or Seleucia, a city in its neighbourhood, on the other side of the Tigris, which is said sometimes to have received its name, or a small garrison town in Egypt known by this appellation. The first opinion is the more probable one, for there is no reason to think that at this time Babylon, though greatly dilapidated, was a mere heap of ruins; though I think it very likely that the word does not refer exclusively to the city, but to the region known as Babylon or Babylonia.[1]

It is the elect dispersion of Babylonia sending their kind regards to the co-elected dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They, having "obtained like precious faith," were "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," co-elect, equally with them, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God, spiritually separated, obedient to the faith, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ." Genuine Christians of the most distant countries, ought to cherish the kindest affections towards each other, and avail themselves of every proper opportunity of expressing them. And christian ministers should gladly stir the sacred flame, and give facilities for its manifestation. Apostolical influence was always employed in this way. Alas! how often has clerical influence been put forth

[1] See note A.

in the opposite direction! The leaders of Christ's people have often made them to err, to wander from the path of catholic unity and love, and kept them wandering. "Blessed are the peace-makers."

§ 2.—*The salutation of Marcus.*

But the apostle transmits the cordial good wishes not only of the church in the region where he was sojourning to their brethren in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, but also the kind remembrances of an individual christian man and minister: "So doth Marcus, my son." We know Peter was married, and ecclesiastical tradition declares that he had children;[1] but we have no evidence that he had sons, or that any of his sons were in the christian ministry. On the other hand, we do know that there was a very intimate connection between Peter and John and Mark. We find Peter going to his mother's house, as to his ordinary abode in Jerusalem, after having been miraculously delivered from prison; and all antiquity represents Mark's gospel as written from information received from Peter, a tradition carrying with it great probability, as none of the gospels has more of that circumstantiality which a narrative coming from an eye-witness naturally possesses, and whatever does Peter credit is rather cast into the shade, while his faults are very plainly stated.[2] There is nothing remarkable in Peter calling Mark his son, especially as it is likely he was the means of his conversion. Paul calls Onesimus his "son, begotten in his bonds," and Timothy his "own son in the faith."[3] "Marcus my son" is equivalent to, who is to me instead of a son, or, as Paul has it in reference to Timothy, "who serves with me as a son in the gospel."[4] It does not appear that, at this time, Mark had ever seen the churches to which Peter wrote; but, though strangers in the flesh, they were dear to him in the Lord. That christian minister has not the proper spirit of his office, who does not cherish an affectionate regard for every christian church, for every christian man, throughout the world.

III.—EXHORTATION.

We come now to the exhortation contained in this postscript: "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity." These words may be understood generally as an exhortation to mutual love, and to all proper expressions of it. 'See that ye love one another, and show that ye love one another;' and in this general sense they embody an injunction obligatory on all christian churches in all countries, and in all ages. But there is no reason to doubt, that the apostle meant the churches he addressed to understand and comply with the injunction in the plain literal meaning of the words. Salutation by kissing was the ordinary way of expressing friendly affection in those coun-

[1] Clemens Alexandrinus—Stromata. Lib. iii.

[2] Origen (Eus H. E. vi. 25) declares that he had learned from tradition that Mark wrote the second gospel ὡς Πέτρος ὑφηγήσατο αὐτῷ.

[3] Philem. 10. 1 Tim. i. 2.

[4] Μάρκον δὲ υἱὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα καλεῖ, ἀλλ' οὐ κατὰ σάρκα.—ŒCUMENIUS.

tries and in that age; and the command is not more strange than if the apostle, addressing a church in our country and times, were to say, 'Give to each other the right hand of fellowship.' We find similar advices given to the other churches.[1] "Salute one another with a holy kiss."[2] "Greet ye one another with a holy kiss."[3] "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."[4] That the apostle meant the members of the churches, on receiving this epistle, to salute one another, is certain; that he meant, that at all their religious meetings they should do so, is not improbable.

That he meant to make this an everlasting ordinance in all christian churches, though it has sometimes been asserted, has never been proved, and is by no means likely. That the practice prevailed extensively, perhaps universally, in the earlier ages, is established on satisfactory evidence. "After the prayers," says Justin Martyr, who lived in the earlier part of the second century, giving an account, in his "Apology," of the religious customs of the Christians, "after the prayers, we embrace each other with a kiss." Tertullian speaks of it as an ordinary part of the religious services of the Lord's-day; and in the Apostolical Constitutions, as they are termed, the manner in which it was performed is particularly described. "Then let the men apart, and the women apart, salute each other with a kiss in the Lord." Origen's note on Romans, xvi. 16, is, "From this passage the custom was delivered to the churches, that, after prayer, the brethren should salute one another with a kiss." This token of love was generally given at the Holy Supper. It was likely, from the prevalence of this custom, that the calumny of Christians indulging in licentiousness at their religious meetings originated; and it is not improbable that, in order to remove everything like an occasion to calumniators, the practice which, though in itself innocent, had become not for the use of edifying, was discontinued.

Some christian societies still retain the practice, and even insist on it as a term of communion. We have no objection to the first; but we must protest against the second. Surely this is not one of the points on which the peace of the church should be disturbed, or her communion broken. They who observe it, should not condemn them that observe it not; and they who do not observe it, should not despise them who observe it. "Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind." In both cases, if they are sincere, they will be accepted of the Lord. The grand matter is the cultivation of mutual love; the mode of expressing it—unless there be distinct proof, which, we apprehend, there is not, that it has been fixed by apostolical authority for the church in all ages—is a matter of very inferior importance. It seems, like every external thing, not essential, not expressly enjoined as a law to the churches, a thing of time and place, depending on the manner of the age or country, like the wearing, or the not wearing, long hair at Corinth. A kiss of charity is equivalent to a kiss not of mere form, but expressive of real christian affection.[5] But though the external *mode* of expressing christian love be a matter comparatively unimportant, the importance of cherishing this affec-

[1] Rom. xvi. 16. [2] 1 Cor. xvi. 20. [3] 2 Cor. xiii. 12.
[4] 1 Thess. v. 26. [5] See note B.

tion, ay, and of expressing it too, cannot be exaggerated. "The entertainment, and increase, and expression of christian love is not optional, but obligatory; the very stamp and badge of Jesus Christ upon his followers." And the members of the same christian church should especially cultivate mutual brotherly affection, and, on all proper occasions, manifest it, by readily and cordially recognizing one another as brethren.

IV.—BENEDICTION.

It only remains now that we say a word or two on the parting benediction, "Peace be with you all that be in Christ Jesus. Amen." It is the all but uniform practice of the apostles, both to begin and end their epistles with prayers and benedictions. Peter began his epistle with the prayer, "Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied;" and he ends with the prayer, "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus." The apostles exemplified their own precepts to "pray always;" to "pray without ceasing." To pray for christian brethren is one of the most natural modes of expressing christian affection; as Christians are "taught of God[1] to love one another," they are also taught of God to pray for one another.

"Peace" is a word expressive of whatever is necessary to happiness. Peace be to you, is just equivalent to, May you be happy. When the man is happy, the mind is tranquil. The unhappy man has a disturbed, unquiet, agitated mind. The import of the wish, "Peace be with you," depends on the views of the person who utters it. In the mouth of a well-informed Christian it means, May you have all the happiness which flows from possessing, and knowing that you possess, that favor of God which is life, that loving-kindness which is better than life; from the conscience being sprinkled with the blood of atonement; from the heart being renewed by the Holy Ghost; from the mind being fixed in the belief of the truth; from the faith of the exceeding great and precious promises; from the hope of the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory. May you "want no good thing." May you be "kept in perfect peace." May "the peace of God keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." May "the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means."[2] This prayer the apostle presents for *all* the elect strangers, as being "in Christ Jesus," so closely related to Christ Jesus as to be, as it were, identified with him, having fellowship with him in his death, his resurrection, his new life, his honors, his happiness; living in him, animated by his spirit, walking in him, sustained by his grace, imitating his example, regulated by his laws, being his living images, his "epistles seen and read of all men."

This is an expression of the love of a christian man to christian men, and is a wish that they may enjoy in abundance christian happiness. It is they only who are in Christ Jesus that can enjoy the peace which the apostle here invokes. There is no peace of this kind to them who are not in Christ Jesus. To all who are not in him there is condemnation: "There is no peace, saith my God, to

[1] Θεοδίδακτοι. [2] Phil. iv. 7. 2 Thess. iii. 16.

the wicked." It is they who believe in Christ, and who are thus united to him, that can enter into peace. To quote once more the devout Archbishop, from whom I part with reluctance as from a pious accomplished friend, who has been my instructive and delightful companion during my leisure journey through this most fertile region of the world of inspiration, and to whom I am much indebted for turning my attention to some of its more recondite beauties, and for gathering for me, and for you, some of its sweetest flowers and richest fruits: "They that are in Christ are the only children and heirs of true peace. Others may dream of it, and have a false peace for a time, and wicked men may wish it to themselves and to one another, but it is a most vain hope and thought; but to wish it to them who are in Christ Jesus hath good ground. All solid peace is founded on him, and flows from him." All who are in Christ have peace. "Being justified by faith, they have peace;" but the apostle's prayer is, that their peace may be multiplied, preserved, increased; that their peace may be as a river, and their happiness as the waves of the sea; that they may grow in holy happiness till they become perfectly happy, because perfectly holy; having the peace of God, because having the purity of God; "peace, quietness, assurance forever."

The peculiar expression, "Peace be with you all who are in Christ Jesus," seems to intimate that there might be among them some who were not in Christ Jesus. It was so in the primitive age as well as now. All were not in Christ who bore his name. To those men continuing in that state, there is, there can be, no peace, no true peace. They may, they do, say, Peace, peace to themselves; but the christian minister dares not say, Peace to them. He wishes, O how eagerly! their salvation; but he expects this only in the destruction of their false peace. His call to them is, "Let sinners in Zion be afraid;" and his prayer to God is, that he may disturb their peace, shake them with salutary terror, chase them out of all the refuges of lies in which they are so apt to seek and find shelter, and never allow them to be at peace till, "being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" never know what hope is, till they "have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel."

The apostle concludes his benedictory prayer with the emphatic Hebrew word, *Amen*, expressive at once of desire and expectation. 'May it be so.' 'It shall be so.' He could not but wish it; for he loved them: and he could not but expect it; for it is one of those promises which "are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us." "The Lord will bless his people with peace."

And now, brethren, I have finished these Expository Discourses on this important and interesting part of Divine truth. It is more than sixteen years since I commenced them. Of those who witnessed their commencement, many are in another, not a few of them, I doubt not, in a better world. We must soon go to them in the grave. Oh! let us see that we also go to them in heaven. It is in a very high degree improbable that I shall ever deliver to you again so long

[1] 2 Cor. i. 20. Psal. xxix. 11.

a series of discourses; a solemn reflection both to me and to you. It says to me, "Make full proof of thy ministry;" it draws to a close; "work while it is called to-day; the night cometh when no man can work." "Prepare to meet thy God." "The Judge standeth before the door." Make up thy account; thou canst not long continue a steward. And to you it says, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

My work in composing and delivering these discourses, and yours in listening to them, are over; but there remain the improvement which ought to be made, and the account which must be given. The first will, I trust, follow; the second certainly shall. It is by attending to the first that we shall be prepared for the second. For this, as for all means of religious improvement, we must ere long give account. O that it may be given with joy, and not with grief! "The Lord grant" that both the teacher and the taught may, notwithstanding all that has been wanting and wrong in the manner in which they have performed their respective parts, "the Lord grant that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day."[1] Amen.

NOTE A. p. 787.

"Explodatur figurata, admittatur literalis expositio."—PEARSON du Succ. Rom. Episc.

"Babylona proprie accipio pro celebri illa Assyriæ urbe."—BEZA.

"Cur Babylon in Italia potius, aut in Egypto quam in Mesopotamia, sit quærenda, causam non video."—WETSTEIN.

"Multi ex veteribus Romam ænigmatice putarunt notari. Hoc commentum Papistæ libenter arripiunt, ut videatur Petrus Romanæ Ecclesiæ præfuisse. Neque enim deterret eos infamia nominis, modo sedis Apostolicæ titulum prætexere ipsis liceat; nec Christum magnopere curant, modo Petrus ipsis relinquatur. Quinetiam, modo retineant Cathedram Petri nomen, suam Romam in profundis inferis collocare non recusabunt. Atqui vetus illud commentum nihil habet coloris."—CALVIN

NOTE B. p. 789.

"Osculo sancto, osculo vero, osculo pacifico, osculo columbino, non subdolo, non polluto."—BEDA. "Non adulatorio sicut Absolon osculabatur populum, non simulatorio sicut Joab Amasam, non proditorio sicut Judas Dominum, non impudico sicut mulier adultera juvenem, sed osculo sancto, quod est caritatis signum et ejus fomentum."—LYRA. "Osculo, non suavio quod voluptatis est, sed osculo quod religionis; osculo caritatis, osculo sancto, osculo in Domino Jesu: quale prisco ecclesiæ ritu, cum super cœnam Dominicam, tum die Paschatis festo, tum in ordinationibus sacris, pie olim et pudice dabatur et reddebatur."—BENTLEY.

"The fraternal kiss with which every one, after being baptized, was received into the community, by the Christians into whose immediate fellowship he entered—which the members bestowed on each other just before the celebration of the communion, and with which every Christian saluted his brother, though he never saw him before—was not an empty form, but the expression of christian feelings; a token of the relation in which Christians conceived themselves to stand to each other. It was this indeed which, in a cold and selfish age, struck the Pagans with wonder: to behold men of different countries, ranks, stages of culture, so intimately bound together; to see the stranger who came into a city, and by his letter of recognition (his 'Epistola formata'), made himself known to the Christians of the place as a brother beyond suspicion, finding at once among them, to whom he was personally unknown, all manner of brotherly sympathy and protection."—NEANDER. Gen. Hist. of the Christ. Relig. and the Church. TORRY's Translation, vol. i. sect. iii. p. 347.

[1] 2 Tim. i. 18.

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